

Plain Vanilla

Selected essays

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Plain Vanilla

Selected essays by
Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī
Jayādvaita Svāmī
and
Drutakarma dāsa

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Viśvambhara dāsa

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**Gurus, Disciples,
Initiations, and Karma:
What Śrīla Prabhupāda Taught**

by Drutakarma dāsa

These days, there are many ideas about gurus, disciples, initiations and *karma* floating about, and it is therefore important that members of ISKCON keep carefully in mind what Śrīla Prabhupāda said about these things. Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON, is the primary source of guidance and instruction, for all members of ISKCON.

One of such ideas is that the spiritual master “never” takes the *karma* of the disciple.

Does the spiritual master ever accept the *karma* of the disciple? Śrīla Prabhupāda addressed this question many times, and he always said that the spiritual master does accept the *karma* of the disciple.

This is confirmed in many places in *śāstra*. For example, the *Hari-bhaki-vilāsa* (1.70) says:

*rāji cātmatyaja doṣaḥ
patnī-pāpam sva-bhartari
tathā śiṣyārtjitam pāpam
guruḥ prāpnoti niścita*

“The faults of the counselor fall on the king, and the sins of a wife fall on her husband. In the same way a spiritual master attains the sins of his disciple. That is certain.”

There are many statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda that go along with this statement of *śāstra*. These statements come from his books, letters, and conversations. First we can consider some statements from his books.

“The spiritual master ... has to consume all the sinful reactions of his disciple.”

“As Kṛṣṇa takes away all the sinful reactions of a person immediately upon his surrender unto Him, similarly the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa, the representative of Kṛṣṇa who acts as the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, takes all the resultant actions 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. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore stated that the spiritual master who plays the part of Kṛṣṇa’s representative has to consume all the sinful reactions of his disciple. Sometimes a spiritual master takes the risk of being overwhelmed by the sinful reactions of the disciples and undergoes a sort of tribulation due to their acceptance. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore advised that one not accept many disciples.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.21.31, purport)

“A spiritual master ... naturally accepts the disciple’s sinful activities.”

“Lord Caitanya says, *bahu-śiṣya nā kariba*: ‘One should not accept an unlimited number of disciples.’” Śrīla Prabhupāda comments: “Accepting an unlimited number of devotees or disciples is very risky for one who is not a preacher. According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, a preacher has to accept many disciples to expand the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is risky because when a spiritual master accepts a disciple, he naturally accepts the disciple’s sinful activities and their reactions. Unless he is very powerful, he cannot assimilate all the sinful reactions of his disciples. Thus if he is not powerful, he

has to suffer the consequences, for one is forbidden to accept many disciples.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līla* 22.118, verse and purport)

“He has to see a bad dream.”

“A devotee sometimes accepts a sinful person as his disciple, and to counteract the sinful reactions he accepts from the disciple, he has to see a bad dream. Nonetheless, the spiritual master is so kind that in spite of having bad dreams due to the sinful disciple, he accepts this troublesome business for the deliverance of the victims of Kali-yuga. After initiation, therefore, a disciple should be extremely careful not to commit again any sinful act that might cause difficulties for himself and the spiritual master. Before the Deity, before the fire, before the spiritual master and before the Vaisnavas, the honest disciple promises to refrain from all sinful activity. Therefore he must not again commit sinful acts and thus create a troublesome situation.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.4.15, purport)

**“The spiritual master ... must sometimes suffer
—if not fully, then partially.”**

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead can accept the reactions of anyone’s sinful deeds and neutralize them because He is *pavitra*, pure, like the sun, which is never contaminated by any worldly infection. *Tejīyasām na doṣāya vahneḥ sambhujo yathā*. (*Bhāg.* 10.33.29) One who is very powerful is not affected by any sinful activity. But here we see that mother Ganges fears being burdened with the sins of the people in general who would bathe in her waters. This indicates that no one but the Supreme Personality of Godhead is able to neutralize the reactions of sinful deeds, whether one’s own or

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those of others. Sometimes the spiritual master, after accepting a disciple, must take charge of that disciple's past sinful activities and, being overloaded, must sometimes suffer—if not fully, then partially—for the sinful acts of the disciple. Every disciple, therefore, must be very careful not to commit sinful activities after initiation. The poor spiritual master is kind and merciful enough to accept a disciple and partially suffer for that disciple's sinful activities, but Kṛṣṇa, being merciful to His servant, neutralizes the reactions of sinful deeds for the servant who engages in preaching His glories. Even mother Ganges feared the sinful reactions of the people in general and was anxious about how she would counteract the burden of these sins." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.9.5, purport)

The same point is made by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his letter to his disciple Śācisūta Dāsa, dated September 19, 1969:

"I have seen what you have written about your protection by my humble self, but that is inevitable when a Spiritual Master accepts somebody as disciple. Krishna says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that He takes charge of a surrendered soul; so much so that Lord Krishna protects His devotee from all his sinful activities in the past. Similarly, the Spiritual Master, when He accepts a disciple and the disciple surrenders unto Him, He has got the responsibility of absorbing the sinful reaction of His disciple's life. This is a great responsibility of the Spiritual Master. We should therefore be very careful not to overburden our Spiritual Master by further repetition of sinful activities. Of course, one who has entered into Krishna Consciousness cannot act deliberately anything sinful. Still, we should always be on guard against such activities. Sometimes we hear that people are going to church to confess their sinful actions for being excused, but as soon as he comes out of the church, he begins the same drama again. This is like the bathing of the elephant, who immediately throws dirt again on his body. We

should not follow such examples. Lord Caitanya accepted Jagai and Madhai on condition they would not commit further sinful activities. So all our students should be careful in the matter of violating the four principles and at the same time must carry on the chanting process rigidly.”

In his conversations with Bob Cohen, which can be found in edited form in the book *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*, Śrīla Prabhupāda extensively discusses how the spiritual master accepts the *karma* of the disciple (February 27, 1972 at Mayapur). We see that even a spiritual master as powerful as Śrīla Prabhupāda must sometimes experience some suffering on account of the disciple’s sinful acts.

Śyāmasundara: ...you said that sometimes you feel pain, some sickness, due to the sinful activities of your devotees. Is that... Couldn’t sometimes disease be that, due to that? Caused by that?

Prabhupāda: You see, Kṛṣṇa says that *aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi*. So Kṛṣṇa’s so powerful that He can immediately take up all the sins of others and immediately make it gone. But when a living entity plays the part on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, he also takes the responsibility of these sinful activities of his devotee. So to become a *guru* is not an easy task. You see? He has to take all the poisons and absorb. So sometimes, because he’s not Kṛṣṇa, so sometimes there is some trouble. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu forbidden that “Don’t make many *sisyas*, many disciples.” But for preaching work we have to accept many disciples, for expanding preaching. Never mind we suffer. But that’s a fact. The spiritual master has to take the responsibility of all the sinful activities of his disciples. So to make many disciple is a risky job unless he’s able to assimilate all the sins. (pause) (break) ... *patitānām pāvanebhyo*. He takes responsibility for all the

fallen souls. That is... That idea is in Bible. Just like Jesus Christ take all the sinful reaction of all people and sacrificed his life. That is the responsibility of spiritual master. Because he's Kṛṣṇa's representative. So Kṛṣṇa takes all responsibility. Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa, *apāpa-viddham*. He cannot be attacked by any sinful reaction. But a living entity may be subjected sometimes, because he's small. Big fire, small fire. On a small fire if you put some big things, (chuckling) then the fire itself may be extinguished. In the big fire, whatever you put, that's all right. Finished. The big fire can consume anything.

Prabhupāda indicates above that only Kṛṣṇa can completely avoid the sinful reactions of the *jīvas*. Later in the same conversation, the same topic is discussed.

Prabhupāda: (break) ... [A disciple] should be very much cautious that "For my sinful actions my spiritual master will suffer. So I'll not commit a pinch of sinful action." That is the duty of the disciple. After initiation his all sinful reaction is finished. Now if he again commits sinful activities, the spiritual master has to suffer. They should be sympathetic for this, that "For my sinful activities my spiritual master will suffer." (break) ... [If the spiritual master is] attacked with some disease it is due to the sinful activities of the disciples. Exactly like Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on account of the sinful activities of others. (break) ... [Therefore it is] forbidden, "Don't make many disciples." But we do because we are preaching. Never mind, let us suffer; still, we shall accept. (break) ... [The] question was that when I suffer it is due to my past misdeeds? Was it not?

Bob: Yes, yes, yes.

Prabhupāda: That is my misdeed, that I accept a disciple who is nonsense. That is my misdeed.

Bob: This happens on occasion?

Prabhupāda: Yes, this is sure to happen because we are accepting so many men. But it is the duty of the disciple to be cautious. That “My spiritual master saved me. I may not put him again into these sufferings.” (break) When the spiritual master is in suffering, Kṛṣṇa saves him. Kṛṣṇa thinks, “Oh, he has taken so much responsibility for delivering a fallen person.” So Kṛṣṇa is there. *Kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*. Because the spiritual master takes the risk on account of Kṛṣṇa.

Bob: So your suffering is not the same kind of pain that an impure person...

Prabhupāda: No, it is not due to *karma*. The pain is there sometimes so that the disciples may know that “Due to our sinful activities my spiritual master is suffering.” (break)

Bob: ... [You are] very well now....

Prabhupāda: I’m always well. (break) ...well in this sense, even there is suffering, I know Kṛṣṇa will protect me. But this suffering is not due to my sinful activities. (break)

The topic of the guru taking the *karma* of the disciple also comes up in a morning walk conversation that took place in Los Angeles on December 17, 1973.

Prajāpati dāsa: But is it true, Śrīla Prabhupāda, that sometimes the spiritual master has to suffer if his disciples act in sinful ways?

Prabhupāda: The same way. Bodily suffering. Infection. The spiritual master accepts the all infection. So as the infection acts on the body, so there is little suffering. Kṛṣṇa says, *aham tvam sarva-papebhyo moksayisyami*. Kṛṣṇa says, “All the sinful reaction of the surrendered soul...” So spiritual master is the representative of Kṛṣṇa. So he has also to accept.

(break) ...the injunction is one should not accept many disciples. But for preaching work we have to do that.

The topic of the *guru* taking the *karma* of the disciple also comes up in a room conversation that took place in Bombay on April 16, 1977. There Śrīla Prabhupāda makes the same point, saying that if his disciples break the principles, “then I become implicated.” He says of the disciple that the spiritual master has “to accept his sinful reaction.”

Prabhupāda: It is not easy job to become a spiritual master. Yes. Then when it is overloaded, you’ll suffer.

Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami: Kṛṣṇa transfers the sinful reaction unto the spiritual master from the disciple.

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Prabhupāda goes on to explain that the spiritual master’s position is different from that of Kṛṣṇa. “This is the principle, that Kṛṣṇa is God. He can nullify everything. But I am not God. When it is overloaded, I have to suffer.” Śrīla Prabhupāda then says that a disciple should be very careful not to commit any more sinful activities, understanding that his spiritual master will have to take the reactions. “That is gentleman,” says Śrīla Prabhupāda.

One idea floating around in some circles these days is that these statements about the spiritual master accepting the *karma* of the disciple do not apply to “first initiation.” Some *gurus* apparently do not consider the first initiation to be very significant, and do not require very much of their disciples. But this was not true of Śrīla Prabhupāda. As can be seen in the following letter to Jadurāṇī dāsī (dated September 4, 1972), Śrīla Prabhupāda definitely says that the spiritual master accepts the *karma* of the disciple beginning with first initiation.

“Regarding your questions, second initiation is real initiation. First initiation is the preliminary, just to make him prepared, just like primary and secondary education. The first initiation gives him chance to become purified, and when he is actually purified then he is recognized as a *brāhmaṇa* and that means real initiation. The eternal bond between disciple and spiritual master begins from the first day he hears. Just like my spiritual master. In 1922 he said in our first meeting, you are educated boys, why don’t you preach this cult. That was the beginning, now it is coming to fact. Therefore the relationship began from that day... . The spiritual master accepts the sinful activities of his disciples from the first initiation. I may give initiation very easily, but what can I do? I am prepared to go to hell for service of Lord Caitanya.”

On the basis of the above letter, some have tried to minimize the importance of first initiation, but in a room conversation that took place on August 13, 1973 in Paris, Śrīla Prabhupāda said: “Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Then, as he practices, becomes more purified, then second initiation. *Gāyatrī. Gāyatrī-mantra*. But the first initiation, according to Jīva Gosvāmī, that is sufficient. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, that is sufficient. But still, to purify them more, the second initiation, *Gāyatrī*, is given.” Śrīla Prabhupāda is here probably referring to Jīva Gosvāmī’s *Krama Sandarbha* commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.23, wherein he says *mantra-dīkṣādyā apekṣa ...* : “The *bhāgavata* Vaiṣṇavas do not actually need *pancarātrika-mantra-dīkṣā* [*gāyatrī* initiation].” Still, in the age of Kali, it is given because the disciples need the purification of deity worship in the temple.

The relationship between *nāma* initiation (initiation into chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*) and *mantra* initiation (initiation into chanting the *gāyatrī-mantra*) is spelled out by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*: “The

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nāma-guru teaches scriptural conclusions and reveals the esoteric nature of the holy name. He initiates the disciple into the *mantra* of the holy name. The *dikṣā-guru* will generally be the *nāma-guru*, and the *dikṣā-mantra* is actually the holy name. The *mantra* [*gāyatrī-mantra*] loses its meaning and purpose if it is separated from the holy name. By chanting the holy name of the Lord, the [*gāyatrī*] *mantra* is automatically chanted.” (edition of Sārvabhauma dāsa adhikārī, p. 54)

That the *nāma-guru*, the *guru* who gives the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, takes *karma* from the disciple, if the disciple commits sinful activities, is confirmed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*: “If ... a *guru* initiates an insincere pretender, he commits a grievous offense for which he goes to hell. The *nāmāparādhas* committed by the charlatan disciple slowly but surely diminish the *guru*’s spiritual potency. Finally the *guru* is ruined. This offense has a devastating effect on the *guru* and disciple. They both must enter hell.” (p. 73). Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura further states: “If by inadvertence or lack of experience, a mistake such as instructing and initiating a faithless person occurs, the initiating spiritual master should be filled with fear and remorse. He has to publicize his offense before the Vaiṣṇava community and reject that insincere disciple, excommunicating him. If the *guru* fails to act promptly, he’ll gradually sink into the depths of moral depravity and illusion and be disenfranchised from the path of devotion.” (p. 73) These statements go along with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement that the *guru* accepts *karma* from the time of first initiation (when the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is given to the disciple).

According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the first initiation, during which the disciple received the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* from the *guru*, is also a serious and very real initiation. Indeed, accord-

ing to Jīva Gosvāmī, it is sufficient in itself (but *mantra-dīkṣā* is generally also given, to help in purifying the disciple). Although in some circles the first initiation is given instantly, with no particular expectation that the followers will follow any regulative principles, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked that his first initiates demonstrate for six months to a year that they were strictly following the four regulative principles (no meat eating, no gambling, no intoxication, and no illicit sex) and he also required them to promise to chant sixteen rounds regularly each day, while trying to avoid the ten offenses to the holy name. He obviously considered first initiation to also be a real initiation, and he definitely said that the spiritual master (meaning himself and spiritual masters following his example and teachings) accept the *karma* of the disciple starting from this first initiation.



Taking Śrīla Prabhupāda Straight

by Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī

So *'ham katham nu visrje tava bhṛtya-sevām*: “How can I give up the service of my spiritual master, who has favored me in such a way that I am now able to see You face to face?” (*Bhāg.* 7.9.28, purport)

Prahlāda Mahārāja spoke these words to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva after the Lord had killed his father. The demigods had already tried to pacify the Lord’s anger by their own prayers, but finding themselves unable, Lord Brahmā asked Prahlāda to try. Seeing Prahlāda lying prostrate before Him, Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva’s anger dissipated. He reached down, lifted Prahlāda to his feet, and placed His lotus hand upon the boy’s head. At once Prahlāda was freed from any material contamination and was able to speak his wonderful prayers. In the midst of these prayers, Prahlāda speaks these lines (here, paraphrased by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport), recognizing that it was not by his own devotion that he received the Lord’s *darśana* but by the good instruction and mercy of his spiritual master.

Prahlāda Mahārāja was not a disciple of a generic guru, not a disciple of the “principle of guru.” Rather, he was a disciple of a particular personality, Śrī Nārada Muni, and it was to this particular personality that he expressed his gratitude. What had his *guru* given him? The ability to see the Lord face to face.

I too am not a disciple of a generic guru. Rather, I am a disciple of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the spiritual master who was entrusted by his

own spiritual master with the mission to carry the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* to the Western world. There are other Prabhupādas in our line—Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was known by his disciples as “Śrīla Prabhupāda,” and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī was also called “Prabhupāda” by his followers. But my Prabhupāda is the disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. My Prabhupāda crossed the ocean in 1965 and brought us Kṛṣṇa. My Prabhupāda translated and commented on many books, including Vyāsadeva’s *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja’s *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He founded a society of devotees and a preaching mission by which the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* has now been spread to every town and village.

My Prabhupāda began as a humble *sannyāsī* in India who wanted to create a spiritual revolution. He realized that to do so, he would need books, specifically, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and that these books would have to be distributed in quantity around the world. His spiritual master had ordered him years ago at Rādhā-kunda: “If you ever get money, print books.” He still carried that order, and giving up almost all other missionary activities, gave his time and energy to making the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* understandable to those who had never heard of *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* and who had little or no interest even in spiritual life. To these people he wanted to give the entire *bhakti* tradition, from the first understanding of the difference between matter and spirit to the understanding of the meaning behind Lord Caitanya’s esoteric ecstasies.

The First Canto’s birth into English was not an easy one. It began in 1960. English was not Prabhupāda’s first language, and he had no Western followers to help him choose the best words or to pay for the printing. He was alone with Kṛṣṇa. But Prabhupāda had faith: “Our capacity of presenting the matter

in adequate language, specially a foreign language, will certainly fail and there may be so many literary discrepancies inspire of our honest attempt to present it in the proper way. But we are sure that with our all faults in this connection the seriousness of the subject matter will be taken into consideration and the leaders of the society will still accept this on account of its being an honest attempt for glorifying the Almighty Great so much now badly needed.” (1st Canto, original) He knew that when there is fire in a house, the neighbors would manage to convey the nature of the emergency, even if they couldn’t speak the victims’ language.

Then in July 1962, Prabhupāda moved from Varṁśī-gopālajī temple to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. From one window he could see Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *samādhi*, and from another Śrī Vṛndāvanacandra, the black marble Deity Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had worshiped hundreds of years ago. In the past, the great *ācāryas* had gathered at Rādhā-Dāmodara—Jīva Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Sanātana Gosvāmī—to chant, write, and to speak *Kṛṣṇa-katha*. It was the best place to work on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Working in the sanctified stillness of Rādhā-Dāmodara, however, was only the beginning of the process of bringing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* west. Śrīla Prabhupāda also had to publish. Commercial publishers were not interested in a sixty-volume *Bhāgavatam* series; he had to find private donors. The donation for the first volume was secured after a journey of 475 miles to the home of Hanumān Poddar. Then the printing began. But the printing costs did not include paper. Śrīla Prabhupāda had to buy the paper himself. Then, when the proofs were off the press, he had carry them back to his room at Chippiwada and correct them. Day after day, Prabhupāda walked between Chippiwada and O. K. Press through the busy Chawri Bazaar. When the binding was complete, he received a

hundred copies of his book to sell. If he didn't sell them, he would not be able to take the rest of his print run. He sold his books to institutions—libraries, universities, schools, and embassies. He went to booksellers and placed books on consignment, and he spent hours walking the streets, trying to sell books to whomever he could. In the meantime, he continued his translation work on the second part of the First Canto. He would not be able to print it, however, until the first volume had been paid for.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did all this without really knowing who would read these books. It was almost beside the point. What was important was that his spiritual master had ordered him to preach in English and to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. His faith in his guru's order was strong, and he worked tirelessly to prepare himself and the *Bhāgavatam* for a journey beyond India. He knew that if someone read even one page of the *Bhāgavatam*, that person might decide to participate in Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement. He wrote, "... [the *Bhāgavatam*] works into the depth of the heart of those who may be worldly men. Worldly men are all engaged in the matter of sense gratification. But even such men also will find in this Vedic literature a remedial measure for their material diseases."

Guru is one, but our spiritual master is never a generic guru. Śrīla Prabhupāda was a specific disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the specific disciple who lived alone in Vṛndāvana and produced these books for a world he could only imagine. Śrīla Prabhupāda was the specific disciple who rather than retiring to Vṛndāvana in his old age, wrote these words in the Preface to his second volume:

The path of fruitive activities *i.e.* to say **the path of earn money and enjoy life**, as it is going on generally,

appears to have become also our profession although we have renounced the order of worldly life! They see that we are moving in the cities, in the Government offices, banks and other business places for promoting the publication of **Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam**. They also see that we are moving in the press, paper market and amongst the book binders also away from our residence at Vrindaban, and thus they conclude sometimes mistakenly that we are also doing the same business in the dress of a mendicant!

But actually there is a gulf of difference between the two kinds of activities. This is not a business for maintaining an establishment of material enjoyment. on the contrary it is an humble attempt to broadcast the glories of the Lord at a time when the people need it very badly.

So even though we are not in the Himalayas, even though we talk of business, even though we deal in rupees and paisa, still, simply because we are 100 per cent servants of the Lord and are engaged in the service of broadcasting the message of His glories, certainly we shall transcend and get through the invincible impasse of *Maya* and reach the effulgent kingdom of God to render Him face to face eternal service, in full bliss and knowledge. We are confident of this factual position and we may also assure to our numerous readers that they will also achieve the same result simply by hearing the glories of the Lord.

In 1965, this lone *sannyāsī*, this specific Śrīla Prabhupāda, arrived in New York City. In 1966, I was fortunate enough to meet him and to receive from his hand the books he had written for me. Śrīla Prabhupāda and his books made me a

devotee. They introduced me to an entirely new world—one of which I never could have dreamed. I took Prabhupāda’s books with me in those early days to my job at the Welfare Department. I lived as much as possible in the new world he had created for me. I learned to use phrases like, “the Supreme Personality of Godhead,” “the spiritual world,” and “the ecstasy of love of God.” I traveled quickly from my nominal Christianity-turned-agnosticism to thinking of myself as a devotee and disciple. This particular Śrīla Prabhupāda taught me to aspire for the spiritual world, to worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and to yearn for Vṛndāvana. He promised me that if I loved him, he would love me. And he kept writing. Even after he left the small nest of 26 Second Avenue, he continued writing, and I continued to be with him, as all his followers did, through his books. We celebrated each new book as it arrived from the press. The books were no longer brick-colored, handbound volumes but produced according to the best American technology of the time. But they were published by Prabhupāda’s own Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, and they nourished us.

He also taught us to participate in his preaching mission. He had written the books for us, but not only for us. We became dedicated booksellers, preachers, and missionaries on his behalf. Over time, however, we developed a deficiency in our spiritual lives. We became so caught up in selling the books that we forgot to read them ourselves. Prabhupāda told us, “In the *Bhagavad-gītā* you find this verse, *nityaḥ śāśvato ’yam purāṇona hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. Do you remember, any one of you, this verse from the *Bhagavad-gītā*? Eh? But you don’t read. So I am writing all these books simply for selling, not for reading. This is not good. And if somebody asks you, ‘You are so much eager to sell your books. Do you read your books?’ Then what you will say? ‘No, sir, we don’t read.

We sell only. Our Guru Mahārāja writes, and we sell.' ... You must read. Why I am writing so many books? Not a single moment waste. If you want to become successful in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, don't lose even a single moment." (Lecture, Hawaii, January 20, 1974)

Because our Śrīla Prabhupāda was the specific person sent by Kṛṣṇa to rescue us from material life, we should not take his books for granted. Aside from that, we should understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, guidance, and love are present in his books. By reading them we gain special access to our Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda is not a generic guru, and his books are not generic *śāstras*. They carry the particular emphasis of his own understanding and devotion. This especially we should not take for granted. His books have released the secrets of the essence of Vedic scripture, once available only in India in the Sanskrit language, into the English language. But there is something more:

When a ripened fruit is cut by the red beaks of [a parrot], its sweet flavor is enhanced. The Vedic fruit which is mature and ripe in knowledge is spoken through the lips of Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who is compared to the parrot not for his ability to recite the *Bhāgavatam* exactly as he heard it from his learned father, but for his ability to present the work in a manner that would appeal to all classes of men.

The subject matter is so presented through the lips of Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī that any sincere listener that hears submissively can at once relish transcendental tastes which are distinct from the perverted tastes of the material world. The ripened fruit is not dropped all of a sudden from the highest planet of Kṛṣṇaloka. Rather, it has come down carefully through the chain

of disciplic succession without change or disturbance. Foolish people who are not in the transcendental disciplic succession commit great blunders by trying to understand the highest transcendental *rasa* known as the *rasa* dance without following in the footsteps of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who presents this fruit very carefully by stages of transcendental realization. One should be intelligent enough to know the position of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by considering personalities like Sukadeva Gosvāmī, who deals with the subject so carefully. This process of disciplic succession of the *Bhagavata* school suggests that in the future also *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has to be understood from a person who is factually a representative of Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī. ...

One should conclude, therefore, that the serious student of the *rasa* should receive the message of *Bhāgavatam* in the chain of disciplic succession from Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who describes the *Bhāgavatam* from its very beginning and not whimsically to satisfy the mundaner who has very little knowledge in transcendental science. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is so carefully presented that a sincere and serious person can at once enjoy the ripened fruit of Vedic knowledge simply by drinking the nectarean juice through the mouth of Śukadeva Gosvāmī or his bona fide representative. (*Bhāg.* 1.1.3, purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda is that bona fide representative. He too has handed the *Bhāgavatam* down carefully, not to satisfy any mundane whims but to take us gradually, step-by-step through the spiritual science. He has invested his purports

with whatever he felt was necessary to take us to the highest spiritual position.

So that's why I like to take my Prabhupāda straight. We often hear nowadays that Prabhupāda might not have presented everything necessary for us to move from *vaidhī* to *rāgānuga* and beyond in his books, that perhaps we need someone to interpret those books for us or to take us beyond them. I don't agree. Rather, Prabhupāda has presented "this fruit very carefully by stages of transcendental realization," and we should be "intelligent enough to know the position of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*" by considering personalities like our Śrīla Prabhupāda, "who presented the subject so carefully."

We can learn about *bhakti* and all its details in any Vaiṣṇava circle, but we cannot learn just anywhere about *bhakti* from Prabhupāda's point of view. If we are Prabhupāda's followers, we do not need to filter his teachings through the teachings of any other *ācārya*, past or present. His teachings provide us with the cumulative wisdom of the *paramparā*. What I have discovered in my study of Prabhupāda's books and by reading the books of other *ācāryas* is that not for a minute does Prabhupāda let us think that attaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness is cheap. He repeats unrelentingly the importance of chanting with attention, removing *anarthas*, hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and serving the spiritual master's mission. He never lets us think we can dance with the *gopīs* while material lust dances in our hearts. This is not just Prabhupāda's emphasis but the emphasis of our predecessor *ācāryas*, whom he represents. He teaches the importance of non-hypocritical following. Did he teach only the basics? Or was he emphasizing the actual process to reach the goal? When we relativize our Prabhupāda's teachings by filtering them through the teachings of another, we lose access to

the particulars that make our Prabhupāda our personal savior. He becomes a relative voice—perhaps not even the most important voice—in what tends to become an eclectic spiritual practice.

I have heard Prabhupāda accused of teaching only *vaidhī-bhakti* and not providing us with instruction about how to step onto the *rāga* path. If we read Prabhupāda’s books carefully, we will see that he is always teaching the *raga* path; his emphasis is always on Vṛndāvana Kṛṣṇa, “that very form with two hands carrying a flute, a peacock feather in His hair, and a beautiful face ... ” (Bg. 18.65, purport) The *ācāryas* define *vaidhī-bhakti* as the performance of devotional service according to the rules and regulations. There are two types of *vaidhī-bhakti*—*vaidhī-bhakti* that has as its goal one of the four types of vaiṣṇava liberation in the Vaikuntha planets, and *vaidhī-bhakti* performed to awaken the desire for spontaneous devotion within the heart. It is this second type of *vaidhī-bhakti* that Śrīla Prabhupāda recommends in his books. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

In the beginning, one has to hear from a bona fide spiritual master. This is favorable for advancing in devotional service. According to this process, one hears, chants, remembers and engages in Deity worship, acting under the directions of the spiritual master. These are the essential primary activities of devotional service. Devotional service must not be executed for some material purpose. ... One has to render such service out of love only. ... Gradually one can rise to the platform of spontaneous loving service. A child is sent to school by force to receive an education, but when he gets a little taste of education at an advanced age, he

automatically participates and becomes a learned scholar. One cannot force a person to become a scholar, but sometimes force is used in the beginning. A child is forced to go to school and read and write according to the instructions of his teachers. Such is the difference between *vaidhī-bhakti* and spontaneous *bhakti*. Dormant love for Kṛṣṇa exists in everyone's heart, and it simply has to be awakened by the regulative process of devotional service. One has to learn to use a typewriter by following the regulative principles of the typing book. One has to place his fingers on the keys in such a way and practice, but when one becomes adept, he can type swiftly and correctly without even looking at the keys. Similarly, one has to follow the rules and regulations of devotional service as they are set down by the spiritual master; then one can come to the point of spontaneous loving service. This love is already there within the heart of everyone (*nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema*). (Cc. *Madhya* 22.109, purport)

He goes on to say that spontaneous service is not artificial. "One simply has to come to that platform by rendering devotional service according to the regulative principles... . If one does not come to the platform of spontaneous service in the beginning, he must adopt regulative service according to the instructions of the spiritual master."

Our Prabhupāda was firm on this point: spontaneous service is not artificial. We have to feel the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa without interruption and without motivation deep in our hearts. How do we get to that point? We follow our spiritual master's instructions. And our spiritual master has instructed

us to follow the path of *vaidhī-bhakti* until we are truly situated on the path of spontaneous love. Nothing cheap, and nothing artificial.

Prabhupāda wanted us to follow the method laid down by the six Gosvāmīs in achieving *rāga-mārga*. But aside from that, Prabhupāda was not in any illusion about who his disciples were and what they needed to make advancement in spiritual life. He lived with his disciples, and lived with them in the West, and he worked with them on a day-to-day level, either directly or through his representatives. Here is a typical purport outlining how he defined an advanced devotee who had attained real love of God:

An advanced devotee situated on the platform of spontaneity is already very expert in śāstric instruction, logic and argument. When he comes to the point of eternal love for Kṛṣṇa, no one can deviate him from that position, neither by argument nor by sastric evidence. An advanced devotee has realized his eternal relationship with the Lord, and consequently he does not accept the logic and arguments of others. Such an advanced devotee has nothing to do with the *sahajiyās*, who manufacture their own way and commit sins by indulging in illicit sex, intoxication and gambling, if not meat-eating. Sometimes the *sahajiyās* imitate advanced devotees and live in their own whimsical way, avoiding the principles set down in the revealed scriptures. Unless one follows the six Gosvāmīs—Śrī Rūpa, Sanatāna, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Śrī Jīva, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa and Raghunātha dāsa—one cannot be a bona fide spontaneous lover of Kṛṣṇa. In this connection, Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says: *rūpa-raghunātha-pade ha-ibe ākuti kabe hāma bujhaba se yugala-pīriti*. The

sahajiyās' understanding of the love affairs between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is not bona fide because they do not follow the principles laid down by the six Gosvāmīs. Their illicit connection and their imitation of the dress of Rūpa Gosvāmī as well as their avoidance of the prescribed methods of revealed scriptures will lead them to the lowest regions of hell. These imitative *sahajiyās* are cheated and unfortunate. They are not equal to advanced devotees (*paramahamsas*). Debauchees and *paramahamsas* are not on the same level. (Cc. *Madhya* 22.153, purport)

Our Śrīla Prabhupāda is not a generic guru, and he never accepted us as generic disciples. Rather, he came to us in the West, faced up to what he found here, and accepted us anyway. He lifted us out of our particular material lives and gave us his particular mercy—his association, his instructions contained in his books, the particular emphasis of his own spiritual understanding. “How can I give up the service of my spiritual master, who has favored me in such a way that I am now able to see You face to face?”



Where the Ṛtvik People are Wrong?

by Jayādwaita Svāmī
(January 1996)

If Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't clearly
and definitely say it, and if it
first came up after 1977,
whatever it is, don't trust it.
– Rule of Thumb

The purpose of this paper is to deal with a particular theory of how Śrīla Prabhupāda intended devotees in ISKCON to receive initiation after his physical departure.

We'll come to the controversies shortly, but first let's look at what we all agree on.

What all of us agree on

Forget for a moment that Śrīla Prabhupāda has physically disappeared. Put aside questions of what should happen in modern-day ISKCON. For the moment, let's just look at the standard teaching Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us about the disciplic succession.

I apologize for presenting a piece of my own writing from BACK TO GODHEAD, but I think it gives a reasonably concise summary that any ISKCON devotee would agree with. Here it is.

From Master to Disciple

The *paramparā* is the chain of spiritual masters and disciples through which Kṛṣṇa consciousness is taught and received. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “I taught this ancient science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvān. Vivasvān taught it to his son Manu. And Manu taught it to his son Ikṣvāku. In this way, through the system of *paramparā*, disciplic succession, the science was understood by the saintly kings.”

In the *paramparā* system, then, the original teacher, the original spiritual master, is Lord Kṛṣṇa, God Himself. The Lord gives perfect knowledge, and that knowledge is handed down from master to disciple. It's like a ripe fruit handed down from person to person, from the top of the tree to the ground.

In the chain of *paramparā*, each spiritual master has the duty to transmit the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as it is. He is not to add anything, subtract anything, or change anything. He simply has to deliver the message, just as a postman delivers a letter, contents fully intact.

According to the Vedic scriptures, one who is serious about attaining self-realization or God realization or the ultimate goal in life must approach such a bona fide spiritual master. It is not optional; accepting a bona fide spiritual master is essential.

The method of accepting the spiritual master is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*: one must surrender to him, inquire from him, and serve him. Inquiry alone is not enough. One must humbly submit oneself before the spiritual master, accepting him as a representative of God.

Where the Ṛtvik People are Wrong?

The spiritual master is not God, and any so-called master who claims to be God should at once be rejected as bogus. But the spiritual master is honored as much as God because he intimately serves God through the disciplic chain. Because each spiritual master serves his own spiritual master, all the members of the chain are ultimately servants of God and therefore very dear to God. More precisely, the bona fide spiritual master is the servant of the servant of the servant of God, or Kṛṣṇa.

This is one of the secrets of the *paramparā* system: to be a genuine master, one must be a genuine servant. The student, therefore, surrenders to the spiritual master as a disciple and serves him, and the master responds by answering the disciple's questions, enlightening him with transcendental knowledge. For the sincere disciple who has full faith in Kṛṣṇa and equal faith in the bona fide spiritual master, all the truths of spiritual realization are factually revealed.

The genuine disciple feels everlastingly indebted to the spiritual master and continues to serve him forever. In this way, even when the spiritual master leaves this world, the master and disciple are connected. The disciple continues to serve the spiritual master by following what the master has taught him, and by teaching it to others. Thus the bona fide disciple becomes a bona fide spiritual master, and the chain of succession continues.

Leave aside, for the moment, further questions about the credentials of the bona fide spiritual master. Leave aside whether he must be an *uttama-adhikāri* or whether a *madhyama-adhikāri* is good enough, whether to serve as guru

one must receive an explicit personal order from the spiritual master or whether a standing general order is in effect. We can talk about these matters later. For now, we are looking only at the fundamentals, at the broad principles everyone agrees on.

I feel confident that every reasonable disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda would be with me on these principles so far. This is what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught to all of us, from 1966 through 1977. It's what all of us learned and accepted and repeated to others. It's "plain vanilla."

On this much, then, we should all be in agreement.

Now, let's move on to something else that everyone agrees on.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, in 1977, appointed eleven disciples to serve as ṛtvik gurus, or "officiating spiritual masters." He authorized these ṛtviks to decide which candidates to accept, and to chant on the candidates' beads and give the new disciples spiritual names. The ṛtviks were to do this on Śrīla Prabhupāda's behalf, and the new disciples were to be not those of the ṛtviks but of Śrīla Prabhupāda himself.

On July 9, 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda signed a document that makes these facts unmistakably clear.

I hope we all agree so far. If not, we're in deeper trouble than I thought. But if so—if we all do agree—we can now put these issues aside and move on.

¹ Note for non-Americans: Ice cream is sold in dozens of elaborate flavors, but the most simple and commonplace is vanilla. So "plain vanilla" is an idiomatic term for anything that is simple, basic, unadorned, and standard.

What is the post-samādhī ṛtvik-guru doctrine?

We now come to the question to be decided:

Did Śrīla Prabhupāda intend that, even after his physical departure, his disciples would continue to serve as ṛtvik-gurus by initiating devotees who would be not their disciples but his?

On November 14, 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda ended his manifest physical pastimes and, as the traditional language puts it, “entered *samādhī*.” The assertion that his disciples should continue to serve as ṛtviks, then, is what we may call the “post-*samādhī* ṛtvik-guru doctrine.”

I trust you will accept that my statement of the question has been accurate and fair and my language neutral.

Now, moving on, I should next make clear that the post-*samādhī* ṛtvik-guru doctrine comes in two forms, which we may call “hard” and “soft.”

The “hard” doctrine says this:

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the only initiating spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees, and he shall continue to be so forever. Acting as ṛtviks on his behalf, certain disciples may initiate new devotees, who then become not their disciples but his. ISKCON shall follow this system, and only this system, forever.

Differing on certain points is the “soft” doctrine:

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the only initiating spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees. Acting as ṛtviks on his

behalf, certain disciples may initiate new devotees, who then become not their disciples but his. This system shall continue until the appearance within ISKCON of pure devotees fit to initiate disciples of their own. The *ṛtvik* system will then come to an end.

It should be instantly clear that these two doctrines are incompatible and mutually exclusive. If the hard doctrine is right, the soft doctrine is wrong, and vice versa. Just as a man cannot be both living and dead, or a woman both pregnant and sterile, we cannot have a *ṛtvik* system that is both permanent and temporary. It's either one or the other—not both.

(I am leaving aside here appeals to “inconceivability.” By arguing that something is “inconceivably true,” one can make a case for literally anything. We accept, of course, that certain scripturally endorsed contradictions are “inconceivably true.” But if we were therefore willing to accept “It's inconceivable” as a valid argument for everything, nothing could ever be shown false. We would then be obliged to accept the truth of even the most ridiculous nonsense.)

For the sake of thoroughness, we may also note that some people have put forward a hybrid “soft/hard” doctrine, in which pure devotees initiate their own disciples and yet the *ṛtvik* system continues side by side. This doctrine, of course, is incompatible with the other two. If it is right, both of the others must be wrong, and if either of the others is right, this one must be wrong.

Now, therefore, we have what I think is a fair and accurate statement of what for the sake of brevity we may call the “p.s. *ṛtvik-guru* doctrines.” (We've seen that there are more than one of them.) I've considered dropping the “p.s.” (“post-*samādhi*”), but I've retained it to avoid later confusion. To keep our thinking clear, we will need to remember that what's

at issue is only what system Śrīla Prabhupāda intended for af-
ter his physical departure.

So the doctrines are now before us, and we've seen that only one of them, at the most, could be true. The question now, therefore, is whether any of these doctrines truly represents what Śrīla Prabhupāda intended, and if so which one.

What are the arguments in favor of the doctrines?

So now let us look at the arguments and evidence put forward in favor of the post-*samādhi ṛtvik* doctrines.

From devotees I've spoken with and papers I've read, the arguments seem to take the following forms:

1. Argument from restatement of what's accepted.
2. Argument from personal testimony.
3. Argument from logical necessity.
4. Argument from the virtues of the doctrines.
5. Argument from a lack of counter-evidence.
6. Linguistic arguments.

Let's examine these arguments one by one.

1. Argument from restatement of what's accepted

Devotees have sometimes announced that they have “irrefutable proof” of the *ṛtvik-guru* system. They then offer into evidence various quotes in which Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of appointing *ṛtviks*. Next comes the document in which Śrīla Prabhupāda actually appoints them, and then letters in which Śrīla Prabhupāda makes clear to the *ṛtviks* their duties. Then

further evidence: testimony from senior devotees that Śrīla Prabhupāda did indeed appoint *ṛtvik-gurus*.

On top of this we are offered a careful tracing of history: Śrīla Prabhupāda gradually handed things over—first the performance of fire *yajñas*, then the chanting on beads, and finally the actual acceptance of candidates and giving of spiritual names. Yet through all of this, we are reminded, the new initiates were always disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and no one else.

And then comes the conclusion: In the face of such an overwhelming body of evidence, how can one deny that Śrīla Prabhupāda did indeed establish the *ṛtvik-guru* system?

The answer, of course, is simple: What the argument succeeds in proving is what everyone already accepts. That Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed *ṛtvik-gurus* and established a “*ṛtvik-guru* system” is not in dispute. Everyone agrees about it.

The argument, therefore, entirely misses the issue.

What’s at issue is whether Śrīla Prabhupāda intended some form of *ṛtvik-guru* system to continue after his physical departure.

Some people seem to think that merely offering more and more evidence that Śrīla Prabhupāda set up a *ṛtvik-guru* system somehow makes the case for a post-samādhi *ṛtvik-guru* system stronger and stronger. It doesn’t. If one wanted to prove the existence of two-headed pigeons, no amount of evidence that there are pigeons would be enough. That pigeons exist is something we already know. What would need to be shown is that some of them have two heads.

Arguments proving again and again what’s already accepted do nothing to settle the issue at hand. When used knowingly and deliberately, such arguments are a form of cheating. When used innocently, they are merely irrelevant.

So let’s leave this behind and go on.

2. Argument from personal testimony

We now come to an argument that is relevant: the personal testimony of devotees who say they heard before Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure that Śrīla Prabhupāda had set up a post-samādhi *ṛtvik-guru* system.

Gaurī Dāsa Paṇḍita, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, tells us that while serving as an assistant to His Holiness Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami in Vṛndāvana, on or about May 23, 1977, he directly heard Śrīla Prabhupāda tell Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami that the appointed *ṛtviks* should continue to serve as *ṛtviks* even after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure. This conversation, he tells us, was even recorded on tape.

In addition, Yaśodānandana Dāsa tells us that in May 1977 Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Bhavānanda Goswami indicated to him that Śrīla Prabhupāda had endorsed a post-samādhi *ṛtvik-guru* system. Yaśodānandana Prabhu offers a diary in which he noted this at the time.

When we come to this sort of testimony, several questions are naturally relevant: How many witnesses are testifying? How reliable are their accounts? How well do they agree with one another?

From the beginning, then, this argument is in trouble. How many people claim to have heard directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted this system? Only one. He was a junior man, not a leading devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda was not confiding in him directly, and though we have nothing bad we wish to say of him he has not especially distinguished himself by his record of devotional service. Moreover, for some reason he held back his testimony until many years after Śrīla Prabhupāda left.

Most important, Gaurī Dāsa Paṇḍita, for all his good qualities, may still be subject to the four frailties common to all

conditioned souls: imperfect senses, a tendency to make mistakes, a tendency to fall into illusion, and a propensity to cheat.

Yaśodānandana Dāsa, of course, is presumably subject to the same four shortcomings. And apart from this, a serious concern is that his testimony is second hand.

If the tape recording Gaurī Dāsa speaks of has ever existed, it has never been found. One may obliquely suggest that someone must have deliberately erased it. But in any case, evidence that doesn't exist is no evidence at all.

What we are left with, then, is mainly Gaurī Dāsa's lone report. And according to Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami, the other person allegedly present, what Gaurī Dāsa tells us is wrong.

At best, then, the evidence from personal testimony is equivocal and weak.

Here, perhaps is the place to bring forward a point made by Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja and approvingly quoted in several papers by proponents of post-*samādhi ṛtvik-guru* doctrines.

At a meeting in Topanga Canyon in 1980, Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja stated that Śrīla Prabhupāda had never appointed the eleven *ṛtviks* to be anything more than *ṛtviks*. "If it had been more than that," he said, "you can bet your bottom dollar that Prabhupāda would have spoken for days and hours and weeks on end about about how to set up this thing with the gurus, but he didn't. . ."

The same point about how Śrīla Prabhupāda let us know what he wanted is relevant here. If he had wanted a *ṛtvik-guru* system to continue after his departure, would we have expected him to have said so merely once in private to his secretary, or would he have spoken about it with his leading devotees "for days and hours and weeks on end"?

For those familiar with how Śrīla Prabhupāda did things, the answer should be easy.

This is a point we shall return to later. But for now let us move on.

3. Argument from logical necessity

Another line of reasoning begins with a critique—much of it valid—of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s leading disciples and their failings after his departure. None of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples, it is argued, is now fit to serve as a bona fide spiritual master. And scriptural arguments are offered to support this point of view.

Therefore, the argument continues, since no one else is fit, the only person of whom we can safely take shelter is Śrīla Prabhupāda himself.

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew the limitations of his disciples, and he must have known what would happen. Therefore, the argument concludes, he must have set up the *ṛtvik-guru* system.

The response to this argument is simple: It is speculative and should therefore be rejected. A speculation may be reasonable or unreasonable, but Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us to rely on authority, not on speculation.

Moreover, this speculation is logically defective. To dispose of it, we need not decide whether Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples are fit or unfit, or whether they “received the order” to become guru or not. Nor do we need to discuss what the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master should be. (These are important topics, but they are not the topic at hand.)

Suppose for the moment that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples are all indeed unfit. It does not therefore logically follow that Śrīla Prabhupāda must have (note the speculative language) set up a post-*samādhi ṛtvik-guru* system.

Instead, if he found his disciples all unfit he could have blessed one or more to quickly attain spiritual perfection. Or

he could have declared that henceforward Kṛṣṇa Himself, or the Bhāgavatam itself, or the holy name itself would be the spiritual master. Or he could have simply left everything up to Kṛṣṇa.

The point is that it's not enough to talk about what Śrīla Prabhupāda could have done or must have done. We have to see what Śrīla Prabhupāda actually did.

To argue that Śrīla Prabhupāda must have set up a *ṛtvik-guru* system and that the evidence for this is so scanty only because it must have been suppressed and covered up is merely to take the speculation one step further.

And speculating is not the way Śrīla Prabhupāda told us to do things. One who wants to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, should avoid taking shelter of speculations.

Coming back to a point on which all agree, we should all take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his instructions. Śrīla Prabhupāda is the exalted pure devotee who gave us the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We can all be completely confident of his instructions and his example. And we can be sure that by strictly and sincerely following Śrīla Prabhupāda we will always be safe and secure.

But we must follow Śrīla Prabhupāda as he himself instructed us to follow. We must follow Śrīla Prabhupāda and those who follow Śrīla Prabhupāda, not the speculations of others.

This brings us to the next argument.

4. Argument from the virtues of the doctrines

The next argument is really just an extension of the previous one: Śrīla Prabhupāda must have set up a *ṛtvik-guru* system, because the system has so many advantages.

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“Just see all the benefits of this system,” declare the advocates of this point of view. “How much better it would be than the alternatives.”

Or the same argument is put in negative form: We are in trouble and perplexity only because we have failed to take up this wonderful system.

To make it all clear to us, the advocates sometimes offer charts showing us the benefits their system would bring, compared to the bad points of what’s going on now.

But those who have learned from history will refuse to be lured. The one-appointed-*ācārya* system of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, the zonal-*ācārya* system of ISKCON—both looked so good. They seemed to offer so many advantages. Or the alternatives seemed so bleak.

For many, only in retrospect could those fine-looking systems be recognized as deviations and therefore causes of disaster.

But, again, what Śrīla Prabhupāda trained us to do was not to evaluate all the possibilities, choose what seems to us to have the most points going for it, and then conclude that this must have been what he wanted. What he trained us to do was to strictly follow what he taught us.

If there’s one lesson we should have learned from history it should be this: However good a path of action may seem, if it’s against what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us, forget it.

5. Argument from a lack of counter-evidence

We now come to another argument we can deal with quickly.

Where, it is demanded, has the *śāstra* or Śrīla Prabhupāda said that one can’t approach an *ācārya* for initiation merely

because he has physically departed? Where do the authorities tell us that a post-*samādhi ṛtvik* system is no good? Can you show me a verse? Can you point to a purport? How then can you say it's not valid?

This is simply a classic argumentative blunder, a textbook fallacy.

“How do we know that you don't beat your wife?” demands the rumor-monger. And then you're stuck there, trying to come up with evidence to counter a groundless accusation.

How do you know there's not a celestial planet controlled by a three-legged grasshopper with seven heads and superhuman intelligence? Can you show me a verse that refutes it? Can you point to a purport?

How can you prove it's not bona fide to take initiation from the ghost of Aristotle's mother or a picture of a self-realized boa constrictor?

One must support one's views by evidence, not by assertions that a lack of counter-evidence makes them true. Enough said.

6. Linguistic arguments

Last, we come to arguments based on linguistics.

One may ask, “If Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted a post-*samādhi ṛtvik* system, where does so he say so in black and white?” The proponents of the p.s. *ṛtvik* doctrines have an answer: The black-and-white evidence is to be found in two places—in the letter in which Śrīla Prabhupāda appoints the eleven *ṛtviks* and in Śrīla Prabhupāda's last will.

The appointment letter is dated July 9th, 1977. It is signed by Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami and countersigned “Approved A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.” Its authority is beyond question.

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The letter explains that Śrīla Prabhupāda has appointed some senior disciples to act as *ṛtviks*, and it lists eleven disciples Śrīla Prabhupāda has so far named to act in that capacity. The letter then says:

“Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendations for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gāyatrī thread, just as Śrīla Prabhupāda has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representative. After the Temple President receives a letter from these representatives giving the spiritual name or the thread, he can perform the fire *yajña* in the temple as was being done before. The name of a newly initiated disciple should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Śrīla Prabhupāda, to be included in His Divine Grace’s ‘Initiated Disciples’ book.”

Clearly, this letter establishes a *ṛtvik-guru* system. But one may ask where it says that such a system should continue even after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure. The answer given is that this is clear from the word “henceforward.”

The next source of evidence, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s last will, is dated June 4, 1977. In the will, Śrīla Prabhupāda declares that

the Governing Body Commission “will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness.” He says, “Each temple will be an ISKCON property and will be managed by three executive directors. The system of management will continue as it is now and there is no need of any change.”

The rest of the will deals almost entirely with provisions for safeguarding ISKCON’s properties. Śrīla Prabhupāda names the executive directors for them. Then he provides that in the event that a director dies or fails to act, the remaining directors may appoint a new one, “provided the new director is my initiated disciple following strictly all the rules and regulations of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness as detailed in my books, and provided that there are never less than three (3) or more than five (5) executive directors acting at one time.”

How is this black-and-white evidence of a post-*samādhi ṛtvik-guru* system? Proponents explain that since Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly intended his will to be in force for generations after his departure, and since he stipulated that each successor director would have to be “my initiated disciple,” it follows that Śrīla Prabhupāda would continue to initiate, long after his physical departure, through a *ṛtvik-guru* system.

Now, what are we to make of these two points of evidence?

The first thing we note is that they’re weak. What would strong evidence look like? Something like this:

“Acting on my behalf, my disciples serving as *ṛtvik-gurus* shall continue to initiate even after my physical departure. The new disciples initiated shall not be disciples of the *ṛtviks*. They shall be my own.”

A statement like that, either in the appointment letter or in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s will, or anywhere else, would have settled the matter once and for all. Of course, no such statement exists.

In the absence of such a clear, unequivocal statement, proponents of *ṛtvik-guru* doctrines have to rely on inference and build their case on more slippery ground. Let’s look more closely.

Let us start with the word “henceforward.” In the appointment letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire that the *ṛtvik-guru* system last forever is supposedly set forth to the world in this one highly significant word. The meaning, we are reminded, is clear: “from now on.” And so Śrīla Prabhupāda desired that the *ṛtvik-guru* system continue even after his physical departure.

Now, the first thing to note about this argument is that it works only for the “hard” version of the post-*samādhi* *ṛtvik* doctrine, in which only *ṛtviks* initiate forever—or perhaps for the hybrid “hard/soft” version. The “soft” version, in which the *ṛtvik* system runs till some qualified gurus come along, is ruled out.

Taking “henceforward” to mean literally forever, never will the *ṛtvik-guru* system come to an end. By this “hard” version of the doctrine, even should an *uttama-adhikārī* someday appear, he will never initiate disciples of his own. At most, he will serve merely as a *ṛtvik*. For according to this hard version of the doctrine, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the final member of the disciplic succession. The succession has come to an end. Śrīla Prabhupāda is the only guru forever after. Henceforward, all new devotees will be his disciples, through his appointed *ṛtviks*.

And since we’re insisting that “henceforward” must mean literally forever, we must apply it not merely to a selected por-

tion of what Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appointment letter says but to the letter in its entirety.

“Temple presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee. ... The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the above eleven senior devotees acting as his representative.”

If we’re being literal, as the argument says we must, then let’s be literal. Though the letter says that Śrīla Prabhupāda has “so far” given a list of eleven *ṛtviks*, he never added to the list. So this is it. The only authorized *ṛtviks* are these eleven. There is no mention that any of them may ever be removed or replaced, nor is there any mention of any successor. Nor does Śrīla Prabhupāda provide that the list may be altered by the GBC. Henceforward, these eleven.

Of these, one—Jayatīrtha Dāsa—fell into intoxication and illicit sex and is now dead. How he will continue to serve as *ṛtvik* henceforward is unclear. But presumably he must, provided we can find out where he is so we can send him requests for initiation from the temples nearest.

And then we have Kīrtanānanda Swami, Bhavānanda Goswami, Rameśvara Swami, and Bhagavān Dāsa Adhikāri, all fallen from their spiritual vows but serving eternally as *ṛtviks* nonetheless.

Or Hamsadūtta Swami. His falldowns have become the stuff of literature, yet now that he has become humble, perhaps he is available to serve as a *ṛtvik-guru* from now till the end of time. For some, perhaps, once again, Hamsadūtta is the only way.

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If these choices somehow don't suit you, you're left with Harikeśa Swami, Jayapātaka Swami, Hṛdayānanda Goswami, Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami, or Satsvarūpa Dasa Goswami. The problem here, of course (aside from the possibility that you may not like them), is that all of them are sure they were supposed to serve as *ṛtviks* only until Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure. As far as they're concerned, the post-*samādhi* *ṛtvik* doctrines are bunk. Now these devotees wouldn't serve as *ṛtviks* for love or money. So if you're looking for an authorized *ṛtvik*, go back to the other names on the list.

And remember, henceforward—from now till the end of time—these are the only authorized *ṛtviks*.

My apologies for the sarcasm, but a person who puts forward an argument is obliged to live with its consequences. And if the consequences are absurd, so is the argument.

So let's suppose you go for the "hard/soft" version of the doctrine, in which self-effulgent *ācāryas* come along to initiate yet still the *ṛtviks* continue side by side. When those self-effulgent *ācāryas* show up, what's the need of them? You can still become Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple through the *ṛtviks*, and that's a safer bet, just in case the effulgence might wear off. And when it comes to *ṛtviks*, you're still stuck with these eleven—and only these eleven. Good luck.

Of course, one could take "henceforward" in a more elastic and informal sense. For example, I might say, "Henceforward I shall take my walk on Juhu Beach every day." Must that mean literally from now till the end of my life? Or, still more literally, from now through eternity, even after I'm physically gone? Or could it simply mean from now till I leave Bombay?

Take the word super-literally if you like—but then be prepared to embrace all the consequences.

Unfortunately, proponents of *ṛtvik* doctrines rarely do this. Instead, most often they'll start out with insisting on a literal

meaning of “henceforward”—an insistence that fits only with “hard” or “hard/soft” versions of the doctrine. Then, having put forward their proof, they switch over to embracing the “soft” version, with which the literal meaning entirely clashes. This, in a word, is cheating. Not a good sign.

So now we come to the second piece of evidence, that phrase from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s will in which he stipulates that each new executive director for the ISKCON properties must be “my initiated disciple.”

The logic, again, is that since Śrīla Prabhupāda must have wanted to protect these properties forever, he must forever have direct disciples, initiated through a *ṛtvik* system.

Again, please note that this logic works only for the “hard” form of *ṛtvik* doctrine (or for the “hard/soft” version), in which the *ṛtvik* system lasts forever. The “soft” version, in which the *ṛtvik* system lasts only until the appearance of qualified gurus, is ruled out: for the will to be followed, Śrīla Prabhupāda must have direct disciples forever, through the agency of his *ṛtviks* (again, “these eleven”).

Even if one wants to go with a “hard/soft” *ṛtvik* doctrine, in which *ṛtviks* and pure devotees in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s line initiate side by side, one might wonder why the disciples of those pure devotees are to be excluded from serving as executive directors. Is their initiation somehow less effective? Are they not equally connected with Śrīla Prabhupāda? But this is a small point. Let us go on.

Before we accept this phrase from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s will as a clear sign of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s intention for an eternally existing system of *ṛtvik-gurus*, let us pause for a moment to see how that phrase got in there. Doing so won’t tip the scales one way or the other, but the history is interesting.

It appears that the theme for the will arises in Vrndāvana on May 27, 1977. That day, Girirāja Swami says to Śrīla

Prabhupāda: “This morning you gave the hint that there might be envious persons coming to take away our properties, so in the GBC meeting we discussed this point.” He then relates how a committee of devotees has come up with a “model trust deed” to protect the properties.

Introducing the text, Rameśvara Swami says, “This is based on the BBT Trust document that you wrote many years ago.” He then begins reading the new document.

In the course of reading, he comes to the list of trustees for various temples, and gradually to those for Vṛndāvana. “The proposed trustees are Akṣayānanda Swami, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa and Viśvambhara.” Viśvambhara Dayal (known as “Bhagatji”) was a devoted friend of ISKCON who rendered much service to Śrīla Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana.

The following conversation ensues:

Prabhupāda: Viśvambhara is not our regular disciple.

Jayapataka: Shouldn’t be included.

Prabhupāda: Then he has to accept *sannyāsa* from me.

Jayatīrtha: Jaya.

Prabhupāda: He should know...

Tamāl Kṛṣṇa: Become initiated.

Jayapataka: Trustee must be initiated disciple.

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes.

Rameśvara: If he is seen... He could be on the advisory board.

Prabhupāda: No, you can say that “If you take *sannyasa*, you become on this.”

Tamāl Kṛṣṇa: So we’ll talk to him, and if he says no, then we’ll select another person and come back and tell you who our choice is.

A few days later, on June 2, devotees present Śrīla Prabhupāda a revised draft.

Girirāja: So we drafted a will, including the trust for the properties of India and some of the other...

Prabhupāda: Will? Will, there will be direction that “Management should be done like this.” That’s all.

Girirāja: Yes.

Prabhupāda: Nobody can say in court case that “This temple will be in charge of this person, this temple. . .”

Rameśvara: Yes, just like you said.

Girirāja: So we’ve included those points. . .

In the original draft, the successor trustees are simply “never less than three or more than five.” But in the second draft the devotees working on the document have added that the trustees, in this draft called “executive directors,” are to be “initiated disciples” following the regulative principles.

Śrīla Prabhupāda signs the will two days later.

If after Śrīla Prabhupāda disappeared he would cease to initiate, why did the devotees working on the document use the phrase “my initiated disciple”? Why not language that took into account that both Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples would soon disappear?

“We weren’t used to thinking like that,” says Girirāja Swami. “In retrospect it’s very naive.”²

But however the language came to be there, the will is signed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and it clearly says that each successor director should be Śrīla Prabhupāda’s initiated disciple.

So the argument still stands: How could a director genera-

² Personal interview, January 26, 1996.

tions from now be Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple unless initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda's *ṛtvik*?

Here opponents of p.s. *ṛtvik* doctrines might argue that we cannot accept the dictionary meaning of "disciple" but instead must offer an interpretation. When the dictionary meaning is clear, no interpretation is needed. But when the meaning is equivocal, an interpretation may be warranted.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives this example: One may say, "There is a residential quarter on the Ganges." But then a question arises: "The Ganges is water, so how could there be houses on the water?" The answer offered is that "on the Ganges" doesn't mean literally on the water of the Ganges but rather "on the bank of the Ganges."

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives this as an example of a legitimate interpretation, offered when there is a legitimate need.

One might argue, then, that since accepting the dictionary meaning of "disciple" would have the unexpected result of requiring the entire system of *guru-paramparā* to be put aside, here an interpretation is legitimately called for.

In fact, however, no such interpretation is required. The dictionary does fine.

Going to the Oxford English Dictionary, we find that a disciple is "one who follows or attends upon another for the purpose of learning from him; a pupil or scholar." More explicitly: "A personal pupil or follower of any religious or (in more recent use) other teacher or master." This is the definition we're most used to, and it's the one the *ṛtvik* people have in mind.

But there's more. Here's the next definition, equally valid: "One who follows or is influenced by the doctrine or example of another; one who belongs to the 'school' of any leader of thought."

This is the sense in which anyone who wants to can, beyond a doubt, become Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple. Any sin-

cere person can follow Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings and example. Anyone can join his school of thought, or, still further, his International Society for Krishna Consciousness. And ultimately one can become not only his disciple in spirit but his “initiated disciple” through the *guru-paramparā* system.

In this sense, by the grace of Śrīla Prabhupāda, one can become not only his disciple but at the same time the disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the six Gosvāmīs, and all the other *ācāryas* in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s line.

“This,” as Śrīla Prabhupāda writes (Bg. 18.75), “is the mystery of the disciplic succession.” One is linked through the transparent medium of the bona fide spiritual master, but at the same time “the experience is still direct.”

We might envision the day when those who believe they have become directly “initiated disciples” of Śrīla Prabhupāda through a *ṛtvik*—or from a picture, or in a dream—might challenge in court that they alone have the right to serve as executive directors for ISKCON properties. Only the direct disciples are bona fide, they might claim, not those who profess to be merely disciples of his disciples in succession. We leave it for you to decide how well this would conform—legally and spiritually—to the intention of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s will.

Questions that matter—or do they?

We’ve now pretty well exhausted, as far as I can tell, the arguments put forward in favor of post-*samādhi* *ṛtvik-guru* doctrines. Whatever we haven’t dealt with are merely variations on the same themes.

If we’re now nearly convinced that none of these doctrines

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is valid, we're nearly ready to get on with the questions we should have been dealing with all along: What are the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master? Do any of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples fit the bill? Before I surrender, how can I be assured that the person I'm approaching is legitimate?

But for those who subscribe to the "hard" version of the *ṛtvik* doctrine, such questions no longer matter. For it's Śrīla Prabhupāda forever. The disciplic succession is finished.

For the advocates of the "hard/soft" version, too, the questions hardly ought to matter. For Śrīla Prabhupāda will initiate eternally through his *ṛtviks*. And even if new gurus come along, they will merely be needless appendages. After all, who could be a greater guru than Śrīla Prabhupāda? And why be initiated by anyone else? For the "hard/soft" people, too, "the eternal system of disciplic succession" is essentially over.

Those who stick to the "soft" version, in which the *ṛtvik* system runs until the appearance of pure devotees, have their special problems. Either they have to "wait for the messiah." Or else they will have to persuade the world that the messiah is already with us.

For when the pure devotee arrives, the *ṛtvik* system will cease. And who is to decide when he arrives? Will he need the unanimous approval of all ISKCON devotees? Or will a 2/3 majority be enough? Will he need to be recognized by a vote of the Governing Body Commission? Or should a panel of experts be appointed to certify we've got the genuine merchandise? If we need a panel, who should be on it?

Till he comes, of course, the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master don't matter. For again the only guru is Śrīla Prabhupāda, and by his order the system of disciplic succession has been indefinitely suspended.

And then there are those who might believe that the next

pure devotee, the self-effulgent *ācārya*, is already with us. Some devotees may hold this belief even now. The problem is, the effulgence is apparent only to them. The rest of the world doesn't see it. And after he has come and gone, if he leaves no pure devotees behind him, what happens then? Will his *ṛtviks* be the only bona fide gurus? Or will it then be his *ṛtviks* and Śrīla Prabhupāda's?

All right, enough. The time has come to leave the *ṛtvik* doctrines behind us.

Sealing the Case: What's Wrong with the P.S. *Ṛtvik* Doctrines?

Before we finally do turn our backs to the post-*samādhi ṛtvik-guru* doctrines, let us look briefly at the additional reasons for rejecting them.

We could place those reasons into six categories:

1. Argument from a need for evidence.
2. Argument from a need to show precedent.
3. Argument from a need for good logic
4. Argument from the consistency of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings.
5. Argument from Śrīla Prabhupāda's final instruction.
6. Argument from how Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed his desires.
7. Argument from the need to reject new doctrines.

Now let us look at these briefly.

1. *Argument from a need for evidence*

This argument is simple. As Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us, the process of speaking in spiritual circles is to say something upheld by authorities.

Our authorities are guru, *sādhu*, and *śāstra*. For us to accept that post-*samādhi* ṛtvik-guru theories are right, we should see statements in which guru, *sādhu*, and *śāstra* directly endorse them. We don't. Therefore the theories should be rejected.

A first-class appeal to authority does not consist of authoritative statements linked with a line of logic: "Therefore he could have. . . Therefore he must have. . ." It consists of a clear, unequivocal statement that directly supports what you're trying to show.

What statements of this kind are available to support the p.s. ṛtvik-guru doctrines? None. Therefore the doctrines should be discarded.

Please note that the argument here is different from the "argument from a lack of counter-evidence" rejected before. We are not saying, "X is true. Prove that it isn't." It's not "You beat your wife. Prove that you don't." Rather, it's "If you believe that X is true, please show that it is." "Oh, do I beat my wife? All right, what's the evidence?"

Neither from guru nor *sādhu* nor *śāstra* do the post-*samādhi* ṛtvik-guru doctrines have any evidence going for them. Therefore we should reject them.

2. *Argument from a need to show precedent*

Again, a simple argument.

Śrīla Prabhupāda usually did what was done by the predecessor *ācāryas*. And never in the history of Gauḍīya

Vaiṣṇavism, nor any other form of Vaiṣṇavism, have we found any instance of a post-*samādhi ṛtvik-guru* system.

Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda could have put in place an unprecedented system. He could have done anything. But the lack of precedent gives a good reason to doubt that he did.

3. Argument from a need for good logic

The reasons given for accepting the p.s. *ṛtvik-guru* doctrines are poor. And why should we accept doctrines backed by poor reasons? We shouldn't.

4. Argument from a need for consistency with Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings

The p.s. *ṛtvik* doctrines require us to accept that Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his last few months, reversed what he'd taught for the previous ten years.

One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.43, purport)

Every student is expected to become *ācārya*. *Ācārya* means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples. . . . Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of the spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. (Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Swami, December 2, 1975) [emphasis supplied]

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So we have got this message from Kṛṣṇa, from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, from the six Gosvāmīs, later on Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Ṭhākura. And we are trying our bit also to distribute this knowledge. Now, tenth, eleventh, twelfth ... My Guru Mahārāja is tenth from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, I am eleventh, you are the twelfth. So distribute this knowledge. (Los Angeles arrival lecture, May 18, 1972)

Commenting on the letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, a treatise advocating a p.s. *ṛtvik* doctrine says, “All the letter states is the normal process of disciplic succession: Guru departs and a qualified disciple continues initiating.” (emphasis in original) The treatise then argues that because no one was qualified, Śrīla Prabhupāda set up a p.s. *ṛtvik* system.

The faulty argument that since no one was qualified Śrīla Prabhupāda “must have” set up a new system has been previously disposed of. What I want to focus on here is a simple point: That a spiritual master initiates until his departure and then his disciples initiate next is the normal system. On this we are all in agreement. This is what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught the entire time he was with us.³

The p.s. *ṛtvik* doctrines require us to accept that Śrīla Prabhupāda—in contradiction to more than ten years of his own consistent teaching—suddenly put aside the normal system and replaced it with a new innovation.

Asking us to accept this is simply asking too much.

³ I’m skipping here the opportunity to offer many more quotes. For a point that everyone agrees on, to multiply the quotes seems needless.

*5. Argument from
Śrīla Prabhupāda's final instruction*

On May 28, 1977, when a deputation of GBC members asked Śrīla Prabhupāda how initiations would go on after Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical departure, his last words on the subject were these:

When I order you become guru, he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. Just see.

“Disciple of my disciple.” The meaning is clear, and it's consistent with Śrīla Prabhupāda always taught us.

For those who refuse to see it, no amount of argument will help. For the rest of us, there it is.

*6. Argument from how Śrīla Prabhupāda
expressed his desires*

Here is the place to recall, one last time, that when Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to do something different and new, he spared no pains to make himself clear. As his disciples will remember, when His Divine Grace had an important point to make, he would drive it into our thick heads again and again and again.

If Śrīla Prabhupāda had wanted to initiate even after his physical departure, he wouldn't have merely disclosed this privately to only one conspiratorially minded disciple. Or packed it all into one pregnant word. Or left it for us to infer from a phrase about property directors.

Where the Ṛtvik People are Wrong?

Had Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to revolutionize the entire *paramparā* system, you can bet your bottom dollar he would have spoken about it for days and hours and weeks on end. But he didn't, because he simply expected us to follow the normal system he had taught us for the past ten years.

Asking us to believe anything to the contrary is, again, simply asking too much.

7. *Argument from the need to reject new doctrines*

Śrīla Prabhupāda entered *samādhi* in 1977. Post-*samādhi* ṛtvik-guru doctrines began appearing only in the mid-1980's.

After all the troubles we've been through since Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure, after all the concoctions, after all the disasters, now we are supposed to put our faith in a truth that came to light only years after Śrīla Prabhupāda physically left us.

The teaching about *paramparā* we all understood and repeated and agreed about till 1977, and for years after—out the window it goes.

Now, with no precedent from *śāstra*, no example from previous *ācāryas*, no clear and public instruction from Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, we are supposed to set aside the normal system Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us the whole time he was physically here. And we're supposed to buy into something entirely opposite, a new doctrine that has sprung up, amidst a swirl of controversy, half a decade or more after His Divine Grace has physically left.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, "And I have to believe it?" Please—that's asking far too much.

Jayādvaita Svāmī

We remind you of the rule of thumb put forth at the head of this essay:

If Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't clearly and definitely say it, and if it first came up after 1977, whatever it is, don't trust it.

So where does that leave us?

It's now time to put the post-*samādhi* *ṛtvik* theories themselves into *samādhi*. And let us get on with genuine spiritual life.

What are the signs of a bona fide spiritual master? What qualifications must he have? How is such a guru to be found?

Such are the questions that should now concern us. Let us put wrong theories aside and move forward.



Where the Ṛtvik People Are Wrong Again

by Jayādvaita Swami
Bombay, March 1998

Two years ago, when Kṛṣṇa Kant Desai and Yadurāja Dāsa came out with their supposed refutation of my paper “Where the Ṛtvik People Are Wrong,” I was more amused than annoyed. Their arguments, I thought, were so bad that hardly anyone would take them seriously.

I was naive. Some people *have* taken them seriously, and been bewildered.

Still, I wasn’t going to waste time on a further response. Rule One for dealing with fanatics: Don’t. But recently my respected friend His Holiness Giridhāri Swami earnestly requested me to respond. So I said, “Ok, I won’t write a paper, but I’ll give you some arguments, and you can do with them as you like.”

So I scribbled out some arguments (ok, I typed them in WordPad). And by the time I was done, I thought, “Well, all right. Might as well go ahead and publish the scribbles.”

So here they are. I apologize for the lack of polish—sometimes the *ṛtvik* people are referred to as “they,” sometimes as “you,” and so on. But in one sense I think this is the right form. Graffiti does not deserve to be answered by Sanskrit poetry.

If at the end of reading this paper you’d rather quit reading papers, leave controversies aside, and go back to reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, I will consider these scribbles something of a success.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Jayādvaita Swami
Bombay, March 1998

Part 1

This paper has two parts because I wrote it pretty much in two sittings. Throughout, I give a quote from the supposed refutation of “Where the Ṛtvik People Are Wrong,” followed by a response.

QUOTE: “We shall use the term ‘Multiple *ācārya* Successor System’, or M.A.S.S., when referring to your favoured method of continuing the *paramparā*”

RESPONSE: Straw-man argument. The focus of my paper is that the *ṛtvik* theory is bogus. The details of how the *paramparā* should continue is a subject my paper doesn’t deal with. So they are dragging in a red herring (a fish we shall run into several times in the course of their paper).

QUOTE: “According to your analysis we are supporters of the ‘hard *ṛtvik* doctrine’ with a subtle modification (underlined):

“Śrīla Prabhupāda should be the only initiating *ācārya* for ISKCON, *for as long as the society is extant*. All members of ISKCON should, in our humble view, aspire to act as instructing spiritual masters, or *śikṣā-gurus*.”

RESPONSE: J Swami identified only three flavors of *ṛtvik* theories. But fertile is the mind, and infinite are the possibilities for concoction. So here we have a fourth. And other flavors could surely be invented. Baskin-Robbins, here we come.

(NOTE: After going further down in the paper, we find that their supposedly subtly different theory—shall we call it the “semi-hard” theory?—is really not different from the “hard” one. But that’s ok, even if you don’t have a different flavor, no harm in advertising that you do.)

QUOTE: “All members of ISKCON should, in our humble

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view, aspire to act as instructing spiritual masters, or *śikṣā-gurus*.”

RESPONSE: A very humble view indeed. Here's Kṛṣṇa Kant Desai, not even initiated, and Yadurāja Dāsa, a second-generation devotee, advising Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, including GBC men and sannyasis and Śrīla Prabhupāda's most senior devotees, how they should aspire to act. Very humble indeed.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement is based on complete fellow feeling and love, but there is a word *maryādā* which means respect which should always be offered to the Spiritual Master and elderly members.” (Letter to Jayapataka, 17 April 1970)

As Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explained (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya* 4.130–131):

tathāpi bhakta-svabhāva—maryādā-rakṣaṇa
maryādā-pālana haya sād'hura bhūṣaṇa

“[I]t is the characteristic of a devotee to observe and protect the *Vaiṣṇava* etiquette. Maintenance of the *Vaiṣṇava* etiquette is the ornament of a devotee.

maryādā-laṅghane loka kare upahāsa
iha-loka, para-loka—dui haya nāṣa

“If one transgresses the laws of etiquette, people make fun of him, and thus he is vanquished in both this world and the next.”

And (166):

maryādā-laṅghana āmi nā pāroṅ sahite

“I cannot tolerate transgressions of the standard etiquette.”

But I suppose that this must be an emergency. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s philosophy has gone to the dogs (his senior disciples—woof! woof!), and only brave souls like Kṛṣṇa Kant and Yadurāja can save it.

Great. But if you’re wrong and you’re really just violating etiquette and committing *aparādhas*, may Lord Śiva and his legion of ghosts have mercy on your wretched and miserable souls.

QUOTE: “Anyone wishing to initiate on their own behalf should do the honourable thing and form their own institution.”

RESPONSE: Among the devotees serving as gurus in service to Śrīla Prabhupāda, how many have expressed a wish to initiate “on their own behalf” anyway?

Again, here our friends have defeated only their own straw man.

QUOTE: “The type of ‘spiritual master’ Śrīla Prabhupāda constantly encouraged all his disciples to become, was *śikṣā*, not *dikṣā*.”

RESPONSE: An authoritative statement from the Kṛṣṇa Kant Saṁhitā.

QUOTE: “This is clear from the purports to the ‘*āmāra ājñāya guru hañā*’ section of the CC: ‘It is best not to accept any disciples’. (CC. Madhya Lila 7:130)”

RESPONSE: They chose a great purport but the wrong quote. This one would have been better:

[T]here is a class of *sahajiyās* who think that these activities [making disciples and writing books] are opposed to the principles of devotional service. Indeed, they consider such activities simply another phase of

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materialism. Thus opposing the principles of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they commit offenses at His lotus feet. They should better consider His instructions and, instead of seeking to be considered humble and meek, should refrain from criticizing the followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who engage in preaching.

Apart from that: It's best not to accept any disciples. That's why Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted 5,000 of them, right?

QUOTE: "To kick off there are two basic assumptions in your paper which we feel are seriously flawed. The first of these is that p.s. *ṛtvik*, by definition, means the end of the disciplic succession, or guru *paramparā*. This is a false assumption."

RESPONSE: My paper doesn't assume this at all. In fact, it makes clear that according to the "soft" *ṛtvik* doctrine, the *paramparā* system is supposed to continue, as soon as one or more "self-effulgent *ācāryas*" appear on the scene.

It would be nice if our friends would argue against the assumptions I made, not the ones I didn't.

QUOTE: "ISKCON will only last for 9,500 more years. Compared with eternity 9,500 years is nothing, a mere blip. That is the time period in which Śrīla Prabhupada shall remain the current link within ISKCON. "

RESPONSE: So their doctrine is now clear. It's not the "hard" *ṛtvik* doctrine "with a subtle modification." It's simply the unmodified hard *ṛtvik* doctrine, as defined in my paper:

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the only initiating spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees, and he shall continue to be so forever. Acting as *ṛtviks* on his behalf, certain disciples may initiate new devotees, who then become

not their disciples but his. ISKCON shall follow this system, and only this system, forever.

Ok, “ISKCON shall follow this system forever” means “as long as ISKCON exists.” But that’s obvious, isn’t it? Well, I guess for guys who need to be told that “henceforward” need not mean “for all eternity,” figuring ought that in this context “forever” means “as long as ISKCON exists” might come as something of an intellectual breakthrough. Congratulations on your satori, men.

BY THE WAY: Nearly all the *ṛtvik* people I’ve met have tried to sell me on the “soft” *ṛtvik* theory (or the “hard/soft” one), in which pure devotees sooner or later reappear and the disciplic succession continues.

Those *ṛtvik* people get no help from Kṛṣṇa Kant. In fact, he’s their opponent. As our previous paper showed, the “hard” and “soft” brands of *ṛtvikism* are mutually exclusive. If one is true, the other must be false.

So even if Kṛṣṇa Kant’s arguments were strong enough (which they’re not) to prove that his “hard” *ṛtvik* theory is right, they’d also prove that the “soft” *ṛtvik* theory is wrong. So either Kṛṣṇa Kant is right and the soft people are wrong, or I’m right and both he and they are wrong. Either way, the “soft” *ṛtvik* theory is wrong.

(The “hard” one, of course, is wrong too.)

QUOTE: “Previous *ācāryas* have remained ‘current’ within the *paramparā* for hundreds or even thousands of years. For example Śrīla Vyāsadeva.”

RESPONSE: You picked a great example, didn’t you guys?

According to a well-known verse, Vyāsadeva is among several ancient persons still alive even today. “Some of the sages, saintly persons, are still living. Still living. They are *tri-kāla-*

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jñā. They have no past, present, future. When this whole universe will be annihilated, then they will go to Vaikuṅṭha or spiritual world personally. So Paraśurāma, Vyāsadeva, and many others, they are supposed to be still living.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, Los Angeles, 25 September 1972)

Even more to the point:

Regarding parampara system: there is nothing to wonder for big gaps. Just like we belong to the Brahma Sampradaya, so we accept it from Krishna to Brahma, Brahma to Narada, Narada to Vyasadeva, Vyasadeva to Madhva, and between Vyasadeva and Madhva there is a big gap. But it is sometimes said that Vyasadeva is still living, and Madhva was fortunate enough to meet him directly. In a similar way, we find in the Bhagavad-gita that the Gita was taught to the sun-god, some millions of years ago, but Krishna has mentioned only three names in this paramparā system—namely, Vivasvan, Manu, and Iksvaku; and so these gaps do not hamper from understanding the parampara system. We have to pick up the prominent acaryas, and follow from him. There are many branches also from the parampara system, and it is not possible to record all the branches and sub-branches in the disciplic succession. We have to pick up from the authority of the acharya in whatever sampradaya we belong to.” (letter to Dayānanda, 4 December 1968)

That does a lot to support the posthumous ṛtvik doctrine, doesn't it?

QUOTE: “The second point we need to urgently address is your ‘regular vanilla’ concept. If there is one feature which

most distinguishes *dīkṣā* transmission in our guru *paramparā*, it is that it is almost entirely devoid of regularity. ... We feel the ‘regular vanilla’ frame is drastically incomplete, and hence potentially misleading.”

RESPONSE: The “plain vanilla” they’re so unhappy about is merely a statement, in the plainist possible terms, of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s basic teachings on the subject of *paramparā*, the teachings His Divine Grace repeated again and again and again.

In the rest of their paper, our friends will devote an inordinate amount of effort to trying to pierce holes in those teachings, by coming up with “exceptions,” “irregularities,” and whatever else they can scrape up.

In this way, they will take Prabhupāda’s teachings—clear, simple, and standard—and try to turn them into something equivocal, complicated, and full of ifs, ands and buts. “Potentially misleading” indeed!

By the way, I said “plain vanilla,” not “regular vanilla.” “Plain” as in “simple,” “clear,” “unadorned,” “easily understood.” They change it to “regular vanilla” so that they can play their little word game of contrasting “regular” with “irregular.” Ho hum. Are we having fun yet?

QUOTE: “According to you the regular form of *dīkṣā* involves a guru teaching his disciple everything he needs to know about Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. The disciple cannot just enquire philosophically from the guru, he must personally approach and serve him as well—(we are not sure if you mean this service and approach must be to his physical body, one to one. If so that was certainly not Śrīla Prabhupada’s *modus operandi*—many of his disciples never met him physically at all). After the guru leaves the planet, the disciple is connected to him largely through his indebtedness and is immediately free to act as a *dīkṣā* guru, initiating his own disciples.”

RESPONSE: Step one in attacking what JS said: Change it.

Step two: Attack the changed version.

“According to you the regular form of *dīkṣā* involves a guru teaching his disciple everything he needs to know about KC.” Well, that’s not quite how I put it, is it? Where are you getting this from?

“The disciple cannot just enquire philosophically from the guru, he must personally approach and serve him as well.”

Is that also supposed to be “according to Jayādvaita Swami”? (Hmm. One must surrender to the guru, enquire from him and serve him—those of us who’ve been at least through the new *bhakta* program probably recognize the verse that idea comes from.)

“(we are not sure if you mean this service and approach must be to his physical body, one to one. If so that was certainly not Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *modus operandi*—many of his disciples never met him physically at all).”

Of course you’re not sure, because, it seems, you’re looking for some sort of hidden meaning in what JS wrote. JS meant what he said, that’s all. Why are you unsure whether JS means that the service “must be to his physical body”? Because that’s not a topic the JS paper is talking about.

“After the guru leaves the planet, the disciple is connected to him largely through his indebtedness. ...” Again, you’re replacing what JS actually said with something of your own concoction. Or reading into his words something he never intended.

Well, that’s not surprising, is it? For our friends, this seems to be the regular stock in trade: Take an author’s words, screw your own meaning from them, and then misrepresent your screwed-up version as being what the author intended.

Well, maybe they can get away with that with Śrīla Prabhupāda, because he’s no longer physically present to pro-

test. But, unfortunately for them, this time the author is still physically on the scene, and here's what he says: "Kṛṣṇa Kant and Yadurāja, you've misrepresented me. What I really said and what you say I said —what I intended and what you say I intended—are entirely different. You're full of prunes."

Free advice: Next time you want to misrepresent an author's intended meaning, do it the way you did with Śrīla Prabhupāda: Wait till he's no longer physically around to say you're wrong.

What JS actually said:

The genuine disciple feels everlastingly indebted to the spiritual master and continues to serve him forever. In this way, even when the master leaves this world, the master and disciple are connected.

The author's own explanation: "Yes, the spiritual master and disciple are connected by that feeling of indebtedness. But, more important, they're connected by *service*. The disciple who sincerely serves the spiritual master is always connected. If you have a problem with that, tough beans."

"After the guru leaves the planet, the disciple is ... immediately free to act as a *dīkṣā-guru*, initiating his own disciples." Well, look in the essay again: JS didn't say *that* either.

Again, the strategy: Modify what the author said, then attack the modified version.

QUOTE: "Perhaps we *are* in deeper trouble than you thought."

RESPONSE: Yes, we certainly are.

You've now completely misrepresented what JS described as "plain vanilla," and you're going to proceed to tear apart the misrepresented version. And some people are going to take

you very seriously, not realizing that you are leading them into deep doo-doo.

QUOTE: “The very first example you give involves interplanetary *dikṣā* (*Bhagavad-Gītā* 4.1).”

RESPONSE: The authors here begin to argue—seriously!—for interplanetary *dikṣā*. “We... know that as a Mahābhāgavat Śrīla Prabhupāda is at least as powerful as demigods like Ikṣvāku. So transferring or transmitting *dikṣā* to receptive disciples should present him no difficulty at all, from whichever planet he may presently reside.”

Interplanetary *dikṣā*—does my memory fail me?—is not a course of action Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended. But our authors are very bright and creative people. So why not? Hold onto your hats, ladies and gentlemen! You’re in for quite a ride.

QUOTE: “[Interplanetary *dikṣā*] seems to be slightly more mystical than mere feelings of ‘indebtedness’... “

RESPONSE: The authors are to be commended for this astute observation.

QUOTE: “If you really do believe 4.1 is an example of ‘regular’ *dikṣā* then maybe we are not so far apart after all. [Some people say] that off-world *dikṣā* transmission violates *śāstra*. And yet by using 4.1 as your only *śāstric* example of the *paramparā* you imply it is quite the thing to do.”

RESPONSE: Huh?

I start off quoting the standard verse from *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and by the time KK and YD are through with me, I’m implying that people should seek *dikṣā* from gurus on other planets. Wonderful!

QUOTE: “We have observed that violations of ‘regular vanilla’ fall into five basic categories, although we do not deny there could be many others.”

RESPONSE: Again, the strategy is made clear: Take Śrīla

Prabhupāda’s standard teachings and shoot them down by finding diverse “violations.”

QUOTE: “1) Gaps.”

RESPONSE: For our friends out there, “Gaps” affords an opportunity to get creative. For those more sober, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s answer to Dayānanda Dāsa is enough to put the matter to rest.

Note also:

This subject of “gaps”—how Śrīla Prabhupāda dismisses it and how our friends seize upon it—demonstrates a clear difference between what Śrīla Prabhupāda was doing and what our *ṛtvik* friends are up to. Śrīla Prabhupāda was in the business of *extinguishing* needless doubts. Our friends are in the business of *igniting* them.

QUOTE: “These [gaps] are all the occasions when an *ācārya* in the *paramparā* leaves, and there is no next link to immediately start initiating. Or the person who is to become the next link does not immediately receive authorisation from his spiritual master to initiate on, or straight after, his departure. For example there was a gap of some twenty years between the departure of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and the next bona fide initiation in our *sampradāya*. Gaps of more than one hundred years are not uncommon between members of the disciplic succession.”

RESPONSE: The logic here is intolerably bad. Śrīla Prabhupāda was initiated in 1933, in the physical presence of his spiritual master. But the fact that he himself didn’t initiate until 20 years later is somehow proof of a “gap,” akin to the supposed gap between Vyāsa and Madhvācārya, and evidence for the cuckoo-bird philosophy of post-*samādhi* *ṛtvikism*.

Put in another context, the argument would go like this:

Sons take birth from fathers and themselves become fathers. But sometimes fathers have no sons until 20 years or

more after their own fathers have passed away. This is clearly a gap—a “violation”—and it demonstrates that a son need not be born of a father. He can just as well be born of his grandfather.

Right.

QUOTE:

2) Reverse gaps ...

3) *śikṣā/dikṣā* links ...

4) Mode of initiation ...

RESPONSE: The arguments here amount to virtually nothing.

QUOTE: “5) Successor systems.

“This refers to differing successor *ācārya* systems within our *sampradāya*. For example Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta adopted a ‘self-effulgent’ successor system. As far as we know Śrīla Prabhupāda opted for an officiating *ācārya* system with his books as the successor.”

RESPONSE: As far as you know. We’re glad you said that.

QUOTE: “With such abundant variety as this it is a challenge to identify what ‘regular vanilla’ actually means.”

RESPONSE: In other words: When Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke of *paramparā*, “disciplic succession,” he was speaking of something so complex or so obscured by violations and exceptions that we can barely make out what he meant. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave no plain, standard teaching. The real truth is “tutti fruti”—almost anything goes.

Yes indeed.

Our friends proceed to argue further along this line. The arguments are just more of the same. No need to waste time on them.

QUOTE: “If by ‘regular vanilla’ you are referring to the general principle of accepting a current link guru who is an authorised member of the disciplic succession, then we are in total harmony.”

RESPONSE: By now it's clear you haven't a clue what I'm referring to.

The rest of your paragraph is just rhetoric. "The p.s. *ṛtvik* system allows unlimited numbers of people to approach, enquire and serve Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is just such a spiritual master. The mechanics of how such acceptance takes place may vary according to time place and circumstance, but the principle remains the same. This principle is certainly not compromised in any way by p.s. *ṛtvik*."

Ok, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the *śikṣā-guru* of everyone. That's not compromised by the p.s. *ṛtvik* doctrine, any more than it would be by the Telephone Pole doctrine (as long as you accept Śrīla Prabhupāda as your *śikṣā-guru*, you can get initiation from the telephone pole of your choice). So what? Does that mean the p.s. *ṛtvik* thing is legitimate? No.

QUOTE: "According to the cover of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (1983 edition), which you yourself revised, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the current representative of the disciplic succession. Despite being clearly stated on your own revised book, when we last met, you adamantly insisted in the strongest possible terms, that Śrīla Prabhupāda was in fact not the current representative of the disciplic succession.

"To justify your dramatic shift in position since '83. . ."

RESPONSE: The sales copy on the book jacket (and did Jayādvaita Swami write it, or edit it, or even see it?) is now supposed to be a clear statement of his philosophical views.

QUOTE: "To justify your dramatic shift in position since '83 you invoked the injunction that 'in order to be a current link the guru must be physically present'."

RESPONSE: What our friends dive into after that is an account of a discussion they had with JS, with a batch of arguments about "current link." Conveniently, our friends are now

able to argue against points they selectively remember from a conversation.

But we thought, from their opening words, that they were going to be responding to JS's *paper*. In that paper, "current link" isn't even mentioned.

We don't blame them. If we had to argue against that paper, we'd look for a way out of it too.

Anyway, here's what their argument is leading up to.

QUOTE: "*As the current link, it is Śrīla Prabhupāda we must approach for initiation.* [emphasis in original]

"Whether Śrīla Prabhupāda is physically present or not is utterly irrelevant to the transcendental process of *dīkṣā*, as he made amply clear in his books, in his lectures, in his conversations and letters—time and time and time again:

" 'Physical presence is immaterial' (S.P Lecture 19.1.67)" [etc.]

RESPONSE: What this amounts to, clearly, is an attack on the idea of disciplic *succession*. According to the dictionary meaning, *succession* is "the coming of one person or thing after another in order, sequence, or in the course of events."

It's this idea of "sequence" our friends have trouble with. Why should the succession go from Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master, to Śrīla Prabhupāda, to his disciples, to his grand-disciples, and so on? Why not just directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda to anyone, now or 9,000 years from now?

Thus, what are friends are arguing for is not "disciplic succession" but "disciplic cessation"—an end to the *paramparā* system. Or—to be fair to them—a 9500 year period in which the succession is "put on hold." Followed, in their account, by the demise of ISKCON and, in short, the utter disappearance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

You see, they're not arguing that the disciplic succession

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should end. Just that it should go on hold until spiritual life on earth becomes untenable and such niceties as “disciplic succession” no longer matter anyway.

And that, you see, is what Śrīla Prabhupāda “consistently taught up until 1977.” Got it?

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Where the R̥tvik People Are Wrong Again Part 2

Our friends now proceed.

QUOTE: “Let us now go to the centre of the controversy. The final instruction.

“Although you optimistically refer to the May 28th conversation as the ‘final instruction’; on consulting our fully authorised BBT calendar we find that July actually follows on from May by two months.”

COMMENT: Here the authors are being not only cute but insulting. “You can’t even tell time.”

If people ten or more years my junior in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement find pleasure in insulting me, I don’t mind. I’m sure I deserve to be insulted.

I’m also sure they can find ways to “prove” they’re being Kṛṣṇa conscious. Oh, well.

As vexing as it may be to have to explain what ought to be obvious—and as vexing as it may be to know in advance that for every bogus argument knocked down, two more will spring up in its place—here goes:

I refer to the May 28th conversation as “the final instruction” for a simple reason: It’s the last time in history that Śrīla Prabhupāda is directly asked the relevant question we’re discussing—How would initiations go on *after* his physical departure.

The question, placed before Śrīla Prabhupāda by His Holiness Satsvarūpa Mahārāja, is as follows:

Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.

That's precisely the question at hand. It is asked clearly and unambiguously. And that is the question to which Śrīla Prabhupāda, on May 28, is undoubtedly responding.

You would like to believe—and you would like us to believe—that the letter written on July 9th is also a direct answer to that same question.

But why do we have to believe this? Does the letter say it? No. Then who says it? *You* do. Fudge!

The logic goes like this:

Thesis: The “final answer” to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja's question comes not on May 28 but on July 9.

Q: How do we know that this is the “final answer”?

A: Because July comes after May.

Q. But how do we know that the letter written in July is truly addressed to the question asked in May?

A. Because it is.

Q.E.D.?

QUOTE: “You say everyone accepts the July 9th order and the establishment of the *ṛtvik* system. In our experience most devotees have never read the July 9th letter before we give it to them, and are quite surprised when they do.”

RESPONSE: You are becoming tiresome. How many times am I going to have to deal with statements from you begin-

ning with “You say” and ending with something I never said?
Here’s what I actually said:

Now, let’s move on to something else that everyone agrees on.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, in 1977, appointed eleven disciples to serve as *ṛtvik-gurus*, or “officiating spiritual masters.”

He authorized these *ṛtviks* to decide which candidates to accept, and to chant on the candidates’ beads and give the new disciples spiritual names. The *ṛtviks* were to do this on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s behalf, and the new disciples were to be not those of the *ṛtviks* but of Śrīla Prabhupāda himself.

On July 9, 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda signed a document that makes these facts unmistakably clear.

Do you see here—or anywhere else in my paper—“everyone accepts the July 9th order and the establishment of the *ṛtvik* system”? My point was not that everyone has read the July 9th letter, or that everyone accepts your posthumous *ṛtvik-guru* system, but simply that just about everyone agrees that Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed eleven *ṛtviks*.

Yet again, you are arguing with your own straw man, not with me.

QUOTE: “[On May 28, after some “muddled questions about disciple relationships”] Śrīla Prabhupāda then finishes by saying that there would be gurus if he orders them, and should he ever do so there would then be disciples of his disciples. Just see.”

RESPONSE: Notice how faithfully our friends have reported what Śrīla Prabhupāda said.

The transcription reads:

When I order, “You become guru,” he becomes regular guru. That’s all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That’s it. [or—an alternative transcription—“Just see.”]

But in the hands of our friends, “when” becomes “if.” And they have helpfully (that is, meddlesomely) added “should he ever do so.”

In sum: They are putting words in Prabhupāda’s mouth.

They do it to me, they do it to His Divine Grace. They do it and do it and do it.

By the way, the “muddled questions” they speak of are such as this:

Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja: [T]hese *ṛtvik-ācāryas*, they’re officiating, giving *dikṣā*. ... The people who they give *dikṣā* to, whose disciple are they?

A muddled question indeed! But if you can’t accept Śrīla Prabhupāda’s answer, then of course you’d like to get rid of the question.

Our friends then proceed further with their interpretation of the exchange on May 28th. No need to comment on that here. In a paper by Giridhāri Swami, Umāpati Swami, and Badrinārāyaṇa Prabhu, that interpretation has already been demolished.

Only perhaps one more point, in passing: They again assail “your M.A.S.S. doctrine,” as if they were attacking something my paper advocated. Again, clearly this is easier than addressing what the paper actually says.

QUOTE: “The final order...”

“Moving on to the actual ‘final order’...”

RESPONSE: Again: Why is this ‘the final order’ as to initia-

tion after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure? Because Kṛṣṇa Kant and Yadurāja say it is, that's why. It is "the final order" merely by their fiat. Phooey!

The paper continues with some brief sophistical arguments not worth talking about. Then. . .

QUOTE: "From where do you derive the notion that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted the system to stop at his departure?" [emphasis in original]

RESPONSE: That's what my paper was about. But while busy jousting with straw men, you seem to have missed it.

How much time am I supposed to waste going around in circles with you? For the answer to your question, read my paper again.

QUOTE: "[T]he most important issue, the one which Satsvarūpa Goswami and all the GBC had specifically asked him about, i.e the process of initiation for after his departure and on for ten thousand years, he remained utterly silent on. No written instructions to his temple presidents, no orders to the GBC, no signed letter. The absurdity of this proposition beggars belief."

RESPONSE: Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks to a delegation of his GBC men, and because he doesn't put his words into writing, according to you he is "utterly silent." The absurdity of this proposition beggars belief.

QUOTE: "If Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings on how to run the *paramparā* in his absence were as crystalline clear as you imply they were, for an entire decade, so clear he did not even need to issue a specific directive to the movement on the matter, why on earth did the GBC send a special delegation to his bedside in the first place?"

RESPONSE: Again, you are badly missing the point. My paper is not about "how to run the *paramparā*." It's about the fact that there's supposed to be a *paramparā*.

Which—ok, ok—our friends accept. There's supposed to be a *paramparā*, a disciplic succession—just there aren't supposed to be any successors. More precisely: For the next 9,500 years, no successors. After that, no nothing.

Just as Prabhupāda taught us, right?

QUOTE: “The only examples you can offer of Śrīla Prabhupāda ever mentioning his disciples initiating are extracted from letters to ambitious deviant devotees like Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa.”

RESPONSE: Well, I suppose I could offer more examples. But what would be the use? Whatever words from Śrīla Prabhupāda I might offer, you can simply wave them away, as you do here, in this case by a character attack on Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa.

If I were trying to defend your argument, and if I were up against such a clear, unequivocal, unambiguous statement as we find in Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, I suppose I'd be desperate to get rid of it too.

You can speculate on Śrīla Prabhupāda's motives. You can try to trivialize Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter by disparaging its recipient.

But you can't get rid of it. In fact, here it is again, this time in its entirety.

New Delhi
2nd December, 1975

My Dear Tusta Krishna Swami,

Please accept my blessings. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 21 November, 1975. Every student is expected to become acarya. Acarya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his dis-

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principles. I have given you sannyasa with the great hope that in my absence you will preach the cult thruout the world and thus become recognized by Krishna as the most sincere servant of the Lord. So I'm very pleased that you have not deviated from the principles I have taught, and thus with power of attorney go on preaching Krishna consciousness, that will make me very happy as it is confirmed in the Gurvastakam yasya prasadat bhagavata prasadah just by satisfying your Spiritual Master who is accepted as the bonafide representative of the Lord you satisfy Krishna immediately without any doubt.

I am very glad to inform you that Sudama Vipra Maharaja is also now following my principles. So I am very very happy to receive all this news. Thank you very very much.

Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bonafide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your Spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bonafide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy.

I hope this letter finds you well,

Your ever well wisher,
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Of course, we're supposed to believe that this letter is just a sop for a deviant. The rest of us can blithely disregard it, be-

cause—how obvious!—it wasn't published to the world. And what Śrīla Prabhupāda told Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa about making disciples was of course something the rest of us had never heard about. As if we'd never read the first verse of *Upadeśāmṛta*:

*vāco vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam
jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam
etān vegān yo viṣaheta dhīraḥ
sarvām apīmām pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt*

A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger and the urges of the tongue, belly and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world.

So long as he does it as a *ṛtvik*, right?

I'm sure there's a Kṛṣṇa Kant purport to that verse. But here's Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking—secretly? to ambitious deviants?—in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class in Śrīdhām Māyāpur (March 6, 1976), 10 days before Gaura Pūrnimā:

[P]eople in general, they cannot understand, but those who are preaching, they must be very sincere, the same way. *Rūpa raghunātha pade, haibe ākuti*. They should read the literatures, the instruction, just like *Upadeśāmṛta, The Nectar of Instruction*. We should follow, strictly follow. Then *pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt*. Then you'll be able to preach and make disciples all over the world. This is the injunction.

It really is.

WINDING UP: I'm getting tired of this. I've been through ten pages of your piece, full of specious arguments, and ten

pages are yet to go, full of arguments equally crummy. Am I supposed to take it all seriously? Your paper doesn't deserve it.

Anyone who hasn't figured out by now that your paper and its theories aren't worth two turds in hell would be unlikely to get the message even if I were to write a book as long as the *Mahābhārata*, as tight as the *Vedānta-sūtra*, and with footnotes as numerous as the verses in all the *Vedas*.

Oh, yes. I can hear it already: "Jayādvaita Swami chickened out. Our arguments were so powerful there was nothing he could say."

Fine. You can spend the next 9500 years preaching to the world that Śrīla Prabhupāda has frozen the disciplic line, from now till the year 11,500, by little more than one "henceforward" and three words about property trustees in his will. Meanwhile, I'm getting on with my work.

Just one more thing. . .

QUOTE: "THERE IS NO REGULAR VANILLA. ... [capitals in original]

"In summary, you insist on the following:

"a) The *r̥tvik* system must stop.

&

b) It must stop on Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure.

"Neither statement a) or b) appears in the July 9th letter. They are purely your own invention. An invention inspired by the 'regular vanilla *paramparā* system', which, as we have clearly shown is itself another fiction created from your own imagination, with no basis in reality."

RESPONSE: For some reason, the July 9th letter is now supposed to be the essence of everything, and nothing can be said without reference to it. Nonsense cannot be called nonsense unless Śrīla Prabhupāda explicitly said it was nonsense in a letter on July 9, 1977. A curious restriction on evidence.

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Anyway:

For anyone who might think that earlier you were merely being cute, not insulting, this time the insult should be clear.

I am supposed to be Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple, a preacher of his words, yet what I present as his plain teachings, you dismiss as a fiction, an offspring of my imagination.

As I mentioned before, I'm sure I deserve to be insulted. But Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings do not.

And so I am adding as an appendix to this paper my supposedly fictional work, this time with footnotes. However much you say you honor Śrīla Prabhupāda, I don't believe you should be allowed to walk up and punch his teachings in the face.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's service,
Jayādvaita Swami



Appendix
**“Plain Vanilla”
Made Plainer**

by Jayādwaita Swami
March 1998

THERE IS NO “REGULAR VANILLA” [capitals in original]

“. . . [T]he ‘regular vanilla *paramparā* system’ . . . is itself another fiction created from your own imagination, with no basis in reality.” (Letter to Jayādvaita Swami from Krishnakant Desai, author of “The Final Order,” etc. 1/4/96)

In my paper “Where the *Ṛtvik* People Are Wrong,” I began with what I thought was clear and basic enough for all of us to agree on. I wrote:

This is what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught to all of us, from 1966 through 1977. It’s what all of us learned and accepted and repeated to others. It’s “plain vanilla.”

For non-Americans, I explained that “plain vanilla” is an idiomatic term for anything that is simple, basic, unadorned, and standard.

I wrote this introduction:

Forget for a moment that Śrīla Prabhupāda has physically disappeared. Put aside questions of what should happen in modern-day ISKCON. For the moment, let’s just look at the standard teaching Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us about the disciplic succession.

I apologize for presenting a piece of my own writing from BACK TO GODHEAD, but I think it gives a reasonably concise summary that any ISKCON devotee would agree with.

But for some people, it seems, “plain vanilla” needs to be made plainer. So I here offer that BTG essay again, this time with footnotes indicating the authenticity of these basic teachings.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

From Master to Disciple

The *paramparā* is the chain of spiritual masters and disciples through which Kṛṣṇa consciousness is taught and received.¹ In *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “I taught this ancient science of *yoga* to the sun-god, Vivasvān. Vivasvān taught it to his son Manu. And Manu taught it to his son Ikṣvāku. In this way, through the system of *paramparā*, disciplic succession, the science was understood by the saintly kings.”²

In the *paramparā* system, then, the original teacher, the original spiritual master, is Lord Kṛṣṇa, God Himself.³ The

¹ “We have to accept perfect knowledge which comes down, as is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, by the *paramparā* (disciplic succession). We have to receive knowledge from the proper source in disciplic succession beginning with the supreme spiritual master, the Lord Himself, and handed down to a succession of spiritual masters.” (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, introduction.)

² *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.1–2

³ “We have to receive knowledge from the proper source in disciplic succession beginning with the supreme spiritual master, the Lord Himself ...” (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, introduction)

Lord gives perfect knowledge, and that knowledge is handed down from master to disciple.⁴ It's like a ripe fruit handed down from person to person, from the top of the tree to the ground.⁵

In the chain of *paramparā*, each spiritual master has the duty to transmit the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as it is.⁶ He is not to add anything, subtract anything, or change anything.⁷ He simply has to deliver the message, just as a postman delivers a letter, contents fully intact.⁸

⁴ “. . . and handed down to a succession of spiritual masters.” (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, introduction)

“The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the message of the Lord as it is to his disciple.” (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, 4.34, purport)

⁵ “The ripened fruit is not dropped all of a sudden from the highest planet of Kṛṣṇaloka. Rather, it has come down carefully through the chain of disciplic succession without change or disturbance.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.3 *nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ*, etc., purport)

⁶ “From a bona fide spiritual master you receive knowledge, because he will present as he has received from his spiritual master. He'll not adulterate or manufacture something. That is the bona fide spiritual master.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Vyāsa-pūjā lecture, London, 22 August 1973)

⁷ “Guru is the representative of Vyasadeva because he does not change anything. What Vyāsadeva said, your guru will also say the same thing. Not that “So many hundreds of thousands of years have passed away. Therefore I will give you a new formula.” No. There is no new formula. The same *Vyasa-puja*, the same philosophy. Simply we have to accept it.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, lecture on the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Hyderabad, 10 December 1976)

⁸ “A post peon, when he delivers you some large amount of money, it is not his own money. The money is sent by somebody else. But he honestly delivers you: ‘Sir, here is your money. Take it.’ . . . Similarly, . . . The spiritual master brings the message from the Supreme Lord and delivers you. And if you kindly accept, then you'll be satisfied. This is the business of the spiritual master.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, lecture on *Gurv-aṣṭakam*, Stockholm, 9 September 1973. Obviously, as throughout this essay, multiple citations could be provided.)

According to the Vedic scriptures, one who is serious about attaining self-realization or God realization or the ultimate goal in life must approach such a bona fide spiritual master.⁹ It is not optional; accepting a bona fide spiritual master is essential.¹⁰

The method of accepting the spiritual master is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*: one must surrender to him, inquire from him, and serve him.¹¹ Inquiry alone is not enough.¹² One must humbly submit oneself before the spiritual master,¹³ accepting him as a representative of God.¹⁴

The spiritual master is not God, and any so-called master who claims to be God should at once be rejected as bogus.¹⁵

⁹ *Tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.3.21. (Cited in the Folio database more than 130 times.)

Tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet. Mundaka Upaniṣad 11.2.12. (Cited in the Folio database more than 300 times.)

¹⁰ “*Gurum evābhigacchet*—one must; it is not optional. It is imperative that one approach the spiritual master ...” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.21.35, purport.)

¹¹ *Tad viddhi praṇiṣātena pariṣāsnena sevayā*, etc. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34)

¹² “Inquiries and submission constitute the proper combination for spiritual understanding. Unless there is submission and service, inquiries from the learned spiritual master will not be effective.” (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, 4.34, purport.)

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Sākṣād-dharitvena samasta śāstraiḥ. (Śrī Gury-aṣṭakam 7)*

“Sage Prabuddha continued to speak to the King as follows: ‘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 Kṛṣṇa. This is confirmed in every scripture, and a disciple should accept the spiritual master as such.’” (*The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter Seven, “Evidence Regarding Devotional Principles—Accepting Initiation from the Spiritual Master and Receiving Instructions from Him) Cf. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.3.21–22

¹⁵ “The disciple’s duty is to offer respect to guru as he offers respect to God.

But the spiritual master is honored as much as God because he intimately serves God through the disciplic chain.¹⁶ Because each spiritual master serves his own spiritual master, all the members of the chain are ultimately servants of God and therefore very dear to God.¹⁷ More precisely, the bona fide spiritual master is the servant of the servant of the servant of God, or Kṛṣṇa.¹⁸

This is one of the secrets of the *paramparā* system: to be a

But guru will never say that “I am—because my disciples are offering me respect as God, therefore I have become God.” As soon as he thinks so, he becomes dog.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, *Vyāsa-pīṭhā* lecture, London, 22 August 1973.)

¹⁶ *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvvyata eva sadbhiḥ / kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam* “The spiritual master is to be honored as much as the Supreme Lord because he is the most confidential servitor of the Lord. This is acknowledged in all revealed scriptures and followed by all authorities. Therefore I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is a bona fide representative of Śrī Hari [Kṛṣṇa].” (*Gurv-aṣṭaka* 7) This is the verdict of all *śāstras*. The guru never says, ‘I am Kṛṣṇa, I am God, I am Bhagavān.’ Rather, the guru says, ‘I am the most humble servant of the servant of the servant of God.’ He does not even say that he is the direct servant. Rather, he is the servant one hundred times removed. *Gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsa*. We should not try to become direct servants, for that is not possible. First of all we must become the servant of the servant. The guru is the servant of Kṛṣṇa, and if we become his servant, we become an actual bona fide servant. That is our real position.” (*Teachings of Lord Kapila*, Chapter Seventeen)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

“Regardless of which stage one is in, when I see that one is engaged seriously and sincerely in discharging the duties ordered by the spiritual master and is thus dedicating his life to the service of the spiritual master, that person becomes most dear to Me.” (Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*, Chapter Seventy-nine, “Meeting of Lord Kṛṣṇa with Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa”)

¹⁸ “[O]ne must accept a spiritual master who comes in the disciplic succession and is a servant of the servant of the Lord.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 6.11.24, purport)

genuine master, one must be a genuine servant.¹⁹ The student, therefore, surrenders to the spiritual master as a disciple and serves him, and the master responds by answering the disciple's questions, enlightening him with transcendental knowledge.²⁰ For the sincere disciple who has full faith in Kṛṣṇa and equal faith in the bona fide spiritual master, all the truths of spiritual realization are factually revealed.²¹

The genuine disciple feels everlastingly indebted to the spiritual master and continues to serve him forever.²² In this

¹⁹ "And one cannot be a bona fide and authorized spiritual master unless one has been strictly obedient to his spiritual master." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.43, purport)

²⁰ *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34. "Tad viddhi pranīpātena paripraśnena. If you have surrendered, then you can ask some question. And sevayā.. That paripraśna should not be challenge. By sevā, by service. This is our process. We must find out guru, we must satisfy him by service and surrender unto him. Then guru will explain. Upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñānīnaḥ tattva-darśinaḥ. He knows everything. He'll explain. This is our program." (Śrīla Prabhupāda, morning walk, Los Angeles, 10 December 1973)

²¹ *Yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau / tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*: "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." (*Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23)

²² *Evam janam nipatitam prabhavāhi-kūpe / kāmābhikāmam anu yaḥ prapatan prasaṅgāt / kṛtvātmāsāt surarṣiṇā bhagavan grhītaḥ / so 'ham katham nu visrjē tava bhṛtya-sevām*: "My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of my association with material desires, one after another, I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes, following the general populace. But Your servant Nārada Muni kindly accepted me as his disciple and instructed me how to achieve this transcendental position. Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?" (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.28)

"[I]t is not possible for the disciple to repay the debt to the spiritual master. Therefore the disciple remains eternally indebted to the spiritual master and continually works in such a way that the spiritual master may become pleased upon him for such sincere services rendered." (Śrīla Prabhupāda, letter to Mantriṇi Devī Dāsī, 29 July 1976)

way, even when the spiritual master leaves this world, the master and disciple are connected.²³ The disciple continues to serve the spiritual master by following what the master has taught him,²⁴ and by teaching it to others.²⁵ Thus the bona fide disciple becomes a bona fide spiritual master,²⁶ and the chain of succession continues.²⁷

23. “[T]he disciple and spiritual master are never separated because the spiritual master always keeps company with the disciple as long as the disciple follows strictly the instructions of the spiritual master.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.47, purport)

“Please always try to remember me by my teachings and we shall always be together. Just like I have written in the first publications of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, ‘The spiritual Master lives forever by His divine instruction and the disciple lives with him.’, because I have always served my Guru Maharaja and followed His teachings I am now even never separated from Him. Sometimes Maya may come and try to interfere but we must not falter, we must always follow the chalked out path layed down by the great acharya’s and in the end you will see.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, letter to Cidananda, 25 November 1973)

24. “As long as the spiritual master is physically present, the disciple should serve the physical body of the spiritual master, and when the spiritual master is no longer physically existing, the disciple should serve the instructions of the spiritual master.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.47, purport)

25. After receiving the spiritual master’s mercy, one must repeat his instructions, and this is called *śravaṇa-kīrtana*.—hearing and chanting. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 19.152, purport)

26. “Lord Caitanya gave a plain order that anywhere we go, simply talk of Krishna Consciousness, and you will become a spiritual master.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, letter to Rupānuga, 7 March 1968)

27. “One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.43, purport)

Where the R̥tvik People Are Wrong Again