STRUGGLE FOR TRUTH

Part - Two

By the devotees of **ISKCON-BANGALORE**

FOLLOWING THE ACHARYA'S DIRECTIONS

March 2009 Article

The pains of this struggle for truth have been borne silently by the devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore for the last nine years. So far we have been trying our best to contain this within the institution.

However, it has become necessary today, unfortunately, to disseminate the sensitive information of purely internal nature in this paper. Our adversaries are exploiting our silence by perpetrating false and maligning propaganda against the devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore, even more vigorously than ever before, in order to demean our cause, and sidestep the real issue.
As supporters and donors of this organization, we believe it is your right to be informed by us of the real issues that have transpired in this matter.

In this second issue, we present more details concerning the developments in ISKCON post 1977.

The *Acharya* to be the focus of a devotee's life >

Srila Prabhupara knew his disciples well >

Srila Prabhupada appoints officiating *Acharyas* or *rtviks* >

ISKCON's dealing with anyone who opposed (post-1977) >

Authorization is important to become a *Guru* >

Peace Proposal >

Additional Explanatory Notes on Peace Proposal by Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa >

Read More

The *Acharya* to be the focus of a devotee's life

In 1965, at the age of seventy, Sri Srimad A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada set out on a 35-day long trans-Atlantic voyage to the US, carrying with him Rs.40 and a trunk load of his English translations of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. He had carried in his heart for over four decades, the order of his spiritual master to spread the message of *Bhagavad-gita* and other Vedic literatures all over the world. Although his endeavors in India so far had met with obstacles and challenges, he was resolute in his determination to serve the order of his spiritual master.

In July 1966, Srila Prabhupada established the ISKCON society in New York and began to attract young American boys and girls to Krishna consciousness. During the next ten years of his life's mission he established 108 Krishna temples around the world, circled the globe 14 times, authored over 70 books and personally inspired thousands in the path of devotion to Krishna. As *Acharya* of the ISKCON society, he formally initiated about 5,000 disciples all over the world in *diksha* (initiation) ceremonies.

In November 1977, Srila Prabhupada reached the eternal abode of Lord Sri Krishna.

Before his departure from this world, Srila Prabhupada laid out his succession plans. Srila Prabhupada had already formed a Governing Body Commission to manage the affairs of the society. Now he had to direct how initiation would be conducted after his physical departure. This was the decision concerning who would occupy the seat of the *Acharya* (*acharya-peeta*) and give initiations (*diksha*) to newcomers – a position of ultimate spiritual and institutional authority.

The *Acharya* rules the heart of a disciple

Srila Prabhupada had taught from the Vedic literatures that an *Acharya* plays a prime role in the development of Krishna *bhakti* in the heart of a disciple. In his books, lectures and other instructions, he emphasized how the disciple should treat and regard the *Acharya*, for a healthy development of Krishna consciousness. It is the direction of the Vedic literatures that is followed by all Vedic traditions (especially the *Bhakti* traditions in India) that the spiritual master or *Acharya* should be worshipped on a par with the Supreme Lord. Srila Prabhupada too taught this principle. In one of the Bhaktivedanta purports, he quotes a verse from *Upanishad*:

- The entire Vedic program is based on this principle, and one can understand it as recommended in the Vedas:

  yasya deve parā bhaktir
  yathā deve tathā gurau
  tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
  prakāśante mahātmanaḥ
  (*Svetasvatara Upanisad* 6.23)

- *"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 Upanisad* 6.23) *One must accept the pure devotee, the representative of God, as one's* **guru** *and then offer him all respects one would offer the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is the secret of success.*

Please note this verse from the *Upanishad* that states one should have *para bhakti* to *deva* (Supreme Lord) and *guru* (spiritual master) and this is the criterion for revelation (*prakāśante*) of the imports of Vedic literatures. And Srila Prabhupada adds, *"offer him* **(guru)** *all respects one would offer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead" as the "secret of success."*

Srila Prabhupada writes in the book, Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, how Sanatana Goswami, one of the prime disciples of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, prayed to his spiritual master after he received instructions on spiritual topics:

- *"Thus Sanātana Gosvāmī prayed for the Lord's confirmation that His teachings would actually evolve in his heart by His grace. Otherwise Sanātana knew that there was no possibility of his being able to describe the Lord's teachings. The purport of this is that the* **ācārya**s *(spiritual masters) are authorized by higher authorities. Instruction alone cannot make one an expert. Unless one is blessed by the spiritual master, or the* **ācārya**, *such teachings cannot become fully manifest. Therefore one should seek the mercy of the spiritual master so that the instructions of the spiritual master can develop within oneself."* (*Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, Ch 14*)

Srila Prabhupada established daily practices in ISKCON when devotees get opportunity to *"seek the mercy of the spiritual master so that the instructions of the spiritual master can develop within oneself."*

Once in 1975 when Srila Prabhupada arrived in the Philadelphia airport, he was received by hundreds of enthusiastic disciples exuberant and joyous with *kirtan* and flower garlands. Sandy Nixon, a writer, witnessed this and later when she met Srila Prabhupada, she questioned him:

- *Ms. Nixon: I also wonder about the many beautiful material things that the devotees bring you. For instance, you left the airport in a beautiful, fancy car. I wonder about this because...*

  Srila Prabhupada: That teaches the disciples how to regard the spiritual master as good as God. If you respect the government representative as much as you respect the government, then you must treat him opulently. If you respect the spiritual master as much as God, then you must offer him the same facilities you would offer to God. God travels in a golden car. If the disciples offer the spiritual master an ordinary motorcar, it would not be sufficient, because the spiritual master has to be treated like God. If God comes to your home, will you bring him an ordinary motorcar—or will you arrange for a golden car?
  (*Room conversations with Sandy Nixon - July 13th, 1975, Philadelphia*)

The Indian devotional traditions stress this aspect about the *guru* or spiritual master and Srila Prabhupada too highlighted this: **the disciple has to learn to regard the spiritual master as good as God.**

In one of the letters that Srila Prabhupada had written to a disciple, he had explained how a disciple has to regard what the spiritual master speaks:

- *You are correct when you say that when the Spiritual Master speaks it should be taken that Krishna is speaking. That is a fact. (Letter to Mukunda - June 10th, 1969).*

Thus it is the culture in ISKCON, which Srila Prabhupada rightly established, that the words of the spiritual master are taken very seriously. In fact, Srila Prabhupada's life is itself a demonstration of how one should take the instructions of the spiritual master as one's life and soul. He often stated that the cause of his success was taking the instructions of his spiritual master to spread Krishna consciousness in the western world as his life and soul. He writes:

- *"This combination, the instruction of the spiritual master and the faithful execution of the instruction by the disciple, makes the entire process perfect. Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura (one of the* **acharyas** *in the line of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu) describes in his explanation of the verse in Bhagavad-gītā, vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ, that one who wants to be certain to achieve spiritual success must take the instruction from the spiritual master as to what his particular function is. He should faithfully try to execute that particular instruction and should consider that his life and soul. The faithful execution of the instruction which he receives from the spiritual master is the only duty of a disciple, and that will bring him perfection."*
  (*Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.22.7, Purport*).

Srila Prabhupada introduced several practices in ISKCON that help to keep the *Acharya* in the focus of a devotee's life

Since devotion to the spiritual master is so fundamental to the development of devotion to Krishna, Srila Prabhupada instituted several practices in ISKCON temples that help to instill and inculcate this. For instance, the daily routine worship in all ISKCON temples begins at 4.15 a.m. All resident devotees are expected to unfailingly rise early and attend this first worship called *mangala arati*. This *mangal arati* begins with the devotees singing the *guruvashtaka*, a song of eight stanzas, glorifying the spiritual master. The devotees repeatetle sing this refrain:

vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam:
I offer my obeisance to the spiritual master.

This song describes the important theological aspects of the spiritual master that every disciple should know and internalize. Hence the worship of Krishna begins every day in all ISKCON temples with the worship of the spiritual master. This is the most fundamental principle of spiritual life that every devotee learns.

Daily worship of the Spiritual Master

Srila Prabhupada introduced yet another daily worship called *Guru Puja* that takes place at about 7.30 a.m in all ISKCON temples. The devotees offer a special *arati* to the Deity of Srila Prabhupada seated on a revered seat (*vyāsāsana*) and sing a Bengali song composed by a 17th century devotee-saint coming in the tradition of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This intensely devotional song describes the theological principles about the position of the spiritual master and emphasizes the role of the *guru* in a devotee's life.

- *"The spiritual master has given me the gift of transcendental vision and I shall remain his servant birth after birth. By his mercy, divine knowledge is revealed within the heart, bestowing* **prema-bhakti** *and destroying ignorance. The Vedic scriptures sing of his character."*

There are hundreds of instances when Srila Prabhupada instructed this central role an *Acharya* plays in the life of a disciple.

The qualifications of such an *Acharya*

In order to play that role of an *Acharya*, one must have extraordinary spiritual qualifications and purity. Only a pure devotee of Krishna who is free from lust, false ego and material motivations can receive such worship and honor on par with God and remain unaffected by it. In such a spiritually elevated state one can receive such adoration and pass on all of it to Krishna and act as a transparent via media to God. Such great souls are indeed very rare. Srila Prabhupada had taught this too.

- *"When one has attained the topmost position of* **maha-bhāgavata**, *he is to be accepted as a* **guru** *and worshiped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of a* **guru**." (*CC Madhya, 24.330, Purport*)

Srila Prabhupada had quoted a verse from the *Padma Purana* that says the spiritual master or guru should be a *maha-bhagavata shreshta:*

- *"The* **guru** *must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees, and the* **guru** *must be accepted from the topmost class."* (*CC Madhya, 24.330, Purport*)

In a letter to a disciple, Srila Prabhupada had explained the exalted position of the spiritual master:

- *"Unless one is a resident of Krishna Loka, one cannot be a Spiritual Master. That is the first proposition. A layman cannot be a Spiritual Master, and if he becomes so then he will simply create disturbance."*
  (*Letter to Mukunda - June 10th, 1969*).

The *Acharya* has to be authorized

The qualifications mentioned above, however, are subtle, internal and subjective. How can a prospective disciple who is in spiritual ignorance identify these esoteric and internal characteristics in an Acharya or spiritual master?

Hence Srila Prabhupada also taught that the *Acharya* had to be authorized. He had taught this timeless Vedic principle in his books:

- *"One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, who is authorized by his predecessor spiritual master. This is called dīkṣā-vidhāna."*
  (*Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.8.54, Purport*)

Srila Prabhupada gave the example of a medical practitioner to whom we go and surrender our bodies to be treated with medicine or by surgery. The lay patient may not be able to identify the technical qualifications of the physician or surgeon. Hence, the government statutes that every qualified physician or surgeon secures a license before one becomes a public medical practitioner. Srila Prabhupada taught that in the same way when one has to surrender his or her self to the spiritual master, the latter has to be authorized by his predecessor spiritual master. He explained this example in a morning class in Vrindavan on October 31st, 1972:

- *"A self-made* **guru** *cannot be* **guru**. *A* **guru** *must be authorized by the bona fide* **guru**. *Then he's* **guru**. *This is the fact. Nobody can be self-made anything. A medical practitioner, he cannot become self-made. One cannot say, "I have studied all the medical books in my home, hence I can practice." No. "Have you ever gone to the medical college and taken instruction from the bona fide teachers?" And then, if you have got the certificate, then you are a medical practitioner. Similarly, bona fide* **guru** *means he must be authorized by the superior* **guru**."

He gave yet another example of how we pay a large sum of hard earned money to an airline agent and receive in exchange a piece of paper called airline ticket. We have faith and confidence that this ticket will enable us to travel to a far off country because the seller of the ticket **was an authorized agent of the airline.**

In 1977, while Srila Prabhupada was preparing to depart from this world to Krishna's world, he was faced with the solemn question: Who would play the role of an Acharya and give **diksha** to the newcomers to the movement? Who would take the position of the Acharya in the hearts of the new devotees who come to the movement? Who would receive the same level of worship, honor and devotion as Krishna Himself from new devotees, and not become corrupt by all the adoration?

Srila Prabhupada knew his disciples well

Srila Prabhupada was aware of the reality that his leading disciples, most of whom were Westerners, were young and inexperienced in age and spirituality. His disciples were in their mid-thirties and most had had exposure to Krishna conscious training for about five to ten years.

Srila Prabhupada was also aware that even his senior most disciples were extremely materially ambitious. He wrote about his first *sannyasi* disciple, Kirtanananda Swami, just two years after he had formed the ISKCON society:

- *Kirtanananda was awarded the position of* ***sannyasa*** *because he wanted it, although I could understand that he wanted to be a spiritual master himself.* (*SPL October 27, 1967*)

Srila Prabhupada had studied his disciples carefully. He wrote of another disciple, Achyutananda, who also had such tendencies to become *guru*

- *The first thing, I warn Acyutananda, do not try to initiate. You are not in a proper position now to initiate anyone.... Don't be allured by such* ***maya.*** *I am training you all to become future Spiritual Masters, but do not be in a hurry.... You don't be attracted by such cheap disciples immediately. One has to rise gradually by service.* (*Srila Prabhupada letter to: Acyutananda, Jayagovinda, Montreal, 21 August, 1968*)

- *So clearly advise them not to indulge in childish frivolities. Acyutananda has already wasted 10 months time by his childish frivolities; sometimes preacher, sometimes* ***guru,*** *and sometimes so and so. So you will kindly give them clear indication that they should stop all these things, and work as directed in the above way--without further delay.* (*Srila Prabhupada letter to Brahmananda Sept 1968*)

Many older ISKCON devotees have acknowledged that Srila Prabhupada had dealt with his disciples who had the ambition to become *guru*. Bhurijana Dasa, author of My *Glorious Master*, recounts yet another instance of how Srila Prabhupada reacted when he become aware of disciples who were ambitious to become *guru*:

- *Prabhupada began criticizing his disciple, Gaurasundara, and his anger was as intense as the monsoon rains. "He wants to be* ***guru,*** *but he is not qualified. All of them, they want to be* ***guru*** *without qualification and they will fall victim to sex life.*

The strongest reprimand from Srila Prabhupada comes just a few months before his passing away when Hamsaduta Goswami, one of his senior men and ***sannyāsīs,*** was trying to become a ***guru*** in Germany without his authorization. The transcription of the recorded conversation that took place between Srila Prabhupada and his secretary, Tamal Krishna Goswami, reveals his assessment of his disciples even towards the end of his life:

- **Srila Prabhupada**: *People complained against Hamsadutta Did you know that?*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *I'm not sure of the particular incidences, but I've heard general...*
  Srila Prabhupada: *In Germany. In Germany.*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *The devotees there.*
  Srila Prabhupada: *So many complaints.*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *Therefore change is good.*
  Srila Prabhupada: *No, you become* ***guru,*** *but you must be qualified first of all. Then you become.*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *Oh, that kind of complaint was there.*
  Srila Prabhupada: *Did you know that?*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *Yeah, I heard that, yeah.*
  Srila Prabhupada: *What is the use of producing some rascal* ***guru****?*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *Well, I have studied myself and all of your disciples, and it's clear fact that we are all conditioned souls, so we cannot be guru. Maybe one day it may be possible...*
  Srila Prabhupada: *Hm.*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *...but not now.*
  Srila Prabhupada: *Yes. I shall choose some* ***guru.*** *I shall say, "Now you become ācārya. You become authorized." I am waiting for that. You become all ācārya. I retire completely. But the training must be complete.*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *The process of purification must be there.*
  Srila Prabhupada: *Oh, yes, must be there. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu wants that.*
  Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā. "You become ***guru.****"* (laughs) *But be qualified. Little thing, strictly follower...*
  Tamal Krishna Goswami: *Not rubber stamp.*
  Srila Prabhupada: *Then you'll not be effective. You can cheat, but it will not be effective.*
  (*Room conversation, April 22nd, 1977, Bombay*).

From 1967 to 1977, the entire period of ISKCON's founding and initial growth right under Srila Prabhupada's physical supervision, he witnessed his disciples trying to become *Acharyas!* And soon after his disappearance in November 1977,the avarice of the disciples to grab control of the "worldwide Krishna empire" that Srila Prabhupada had built with dedication and devotion to his *guru* and Krishna grew stronger. In 1977 when Srila Prabhupada was about to leave this world, the legacy that Srila Prabhupada was leaving behind was, materially speaking, worth millions of dollars. And these disciples were pressing Srila Prabhupada for the appointment of a successor *acharya* from among them, for the ultimate fulfillment of their ambitions. This is well acknowledged in the documented histories of ISKCON and Srila Prabhupada:

- *"There is a failure to appreciate the problem Srila Prabhupada faced in his last days. We can be sure that he knew his own disciples better than they knew themselves; he had no illusions about their spiritual qualification. Yet they were pressing for a selection of successor* ***gurus,*** *the ultimate position for the ambitious. Hamsadutta and Kirtanananda had already been rebuked by Srila Prabhupada for receiving* ***guru-puja*** *in the presence of the spiritual master, a serious transgression."*
  (*'Cleaning House and Cleaning Hearts' by* Ravindra Svarupa Dasa, *1994*).

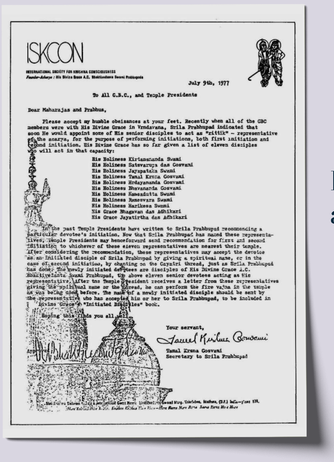
There was a lot of pressure to appoint an *Acharya*

In around 2004, His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami, a member of the International GBC visited ISKCON Bangalore temple and stayed for two days. HH Bhakti Charu Swami was a young, well-educated Bengali who had joined ISKCON during Srila Prabhupada's time in 1976. Later Srila Prabhupada gave him *sannyas* and he had the special opportunity of serving Srila Prabhupada in 1977 in Vrindavan, attending to his personal needs during his last months, weeks and days.

During HH Bhakti Charu Swami's visit to Bangalore, in a private heart-to-heart conversation with Madhu Pandit Dasa and Chanchalapathi Dasa, he described the circumstances around Srila Prabhupada just before he passed away. HH Bhakti Charu Swami recalled, *"During the last days of Srila Prabhupada, there was a lot of pressure on Srila Prabhupada to appoint the next* ***Acharya.*** *Once just after the devotees had left his room, Srila Prabhupada turned to me and spoke in Bengali, 'My Guru Maharaj did not appoint an* ***Acharya****; and they expect me to appoint one!?' "*

Srila Prabhupada appoints Officiating *Acharyas* or *rtviks*

Under these circumstances, **Srila Prabhupada did not appoint any successor Acharya.** Instead he appointed eleven Officiating *Acharyas* or *rtviks*, who would initiate on his behalf and the new initiates would be Srila Prabhupada's disciples. He issued a written directive to the whole institution explaining this system of initiation four months prior to his departure from this world. The system of initiation as outlined in this directive was practiced in ISKCON until Srila Prabhupada's passing away on Nov 14th, 1977.



ISKCON

July 9th, 1977

To All G.B.C., and Temple Presidents

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vrndavana, Srila Prabhupad indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "ritvik" - representative of the acharya, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation. His Divine Grace has so far given a list of eleven disciples who will act in that capacity:

His Holiness Kirtanananda Swami
His Holiness Satsvarupa das Gosvami
His Holiness Jayapataka Swami
His Holiness Tamal Krsna Gosvami
His Holiness Brhadvanda Gosvami
His Holiness Hrdayananda Gosvami
His Holiness Bhavananda Gosvami
His Holiness Ramesvara Swami
His Holiness Hariksa Swami
His Grace Bhagavan dasa Adhikari
His Grace Jayatirtha das Adhikari

In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupad recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupad has named these representatives, 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 as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupad by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupada has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, 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 yajna 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 Srila Prabhupad, to be included in His Divine Grace's "Initiated Disciples" book.

Hoping this finds you all well.
Approved

Your servant,
Tamala Krsna Gosvami
Secretary to Srila Prabhupad

Institutional directive on initiation approved by Srila Prabhupada

ISKCON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

July 9th, 1977

To All G.B.C., and Temple Presidents

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,
Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vrindavan, Srila Prabhupada indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "ritvik" representative of the *acharya*, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation. His Divine Grace has so far given a list of eleven disciples who will act in that capacity:

His Holiness Kirtanananda Swami
His Holiness Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami
His Holiness Jayapataka Swami
His Holiness Tamala Krsna Gosvami
His Holiness Hrdayananda Gosvami
His Holiness Bhavananda Gosvami
His Holiness Hamsaduta Swami
His Holiness Ramesvara Swami
His Holiness Harikesa Swami
His Grace Bhagavan dasa Adhikari
His Grace Jayatirtha dasa Adhikari

In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupada recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, 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 as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupada has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, 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 yajna 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 Srila Prabhupada, to be included in His Divine Grace's "Initiated Disciples" book.

Hoping this finds you all well.
Approved

[Srila Prabhupada's signature appears on the original]
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Your servant,
[Tamala Krsna Gosvami's signature appears on the original]
Tamala Krsna Gosvami
Secretary to Srila Prabhupada

However, soon after his departure from this world, these eleven disciples, who were all Westerners, who were chosen to play the role of Officiating *Acharyas* (*rtviks*) conspired and declared themselves, without authorization from Srila Prabhupada, to be the next *Acharyas*. They raised themselves to the level of *Acharyas* and instituted elaborate levels of worship, honor and praise that only a true *Acharya* can receive. Innocent newcomers were regimented to follow this, lest it would lead to *guru-aparadha*, an offense to the spiritual master the consequence of which is that one will not get Krishna *bhakti* for millions of lives!!

In the next few years after 1977, ISKCON went through several crises and had to face some major embarrassments as one by one these self-proclaimed *Acharyas* had disgraceful fall-downs from their spiritual position. One of them, a *sannyasi*, was found to be having an affair with one of his young female disciples and eventually ran away with her![1] Another self-proclaimed *Acharya* became an authoritarian cult leader demanding unquestioning submission and punished and even murdered disloyal devotees.[2] Yet another declared that he was "conversing with Krishna" while he was found to be indulging in drugs.[3] And the list is long, shameful and painful. Initially ISKCON made a desperate attempt to cover up these occurrences, but in due course of time the cat was let out of the bag. The great international movement that Srila Prabhupada established to spread the pure teachings of *Bhagavad-gita* and Vedic literatures had been derailed by the self-proclaimed *Acharyas* at the helm of affairs.

In 1980, HH Tamal Krishna Goswami, the personal secretary of Srila Prabhupada during his last days in Vrindavan in 1977, admitted in what has come to be known in ISKCON circles as the famous Pyramid House confessions:

- *"Actually Prabhupada never appointed any* ***gurus****. He appointed eleven* ***ritviks****. He never appointed them* ***gurus****. Myself and the other GBC have done the greatest disservice to this movement the last three years because we interpreted the appointment of* ***ritviks*** *as the appointment of* ***gurus****."*

The Governing Body Commission held it's annual meeting in early 1981 at Mayapur, West Bengal. They rejected the conclusions of the Pyramid House talks. Tamal Krishna Goswami sided with the GBC and retracted his statements.[4]

ISKCON's dealing with anyone who opposed (post-1977)

Increase the wrong

In the mid-1980s, the Governing Body Commission, which was dominated and controlled by similarly ambitious disciples, most of whom were Westerners, made a major modification in the *Acharya* system. By then the number of self-proclaimed *Acharyas* had diminished from eleven to about five due to series of disgraceful fall downs. The GBC amended the ISKCON laws and declared that any of the disciples of Srila Prabhupada, if selected through a process, could become an *Acharya*. **Instead of setting right the wrong, they went on to increase the wrong.** Accordingly the number of self proclaimed *Acharyas* has now increased to about seventy by more such unauthorized appointments! Every year a few of these self-proclaimed *Acharyas* fall from grace[1], and every year new *Acharyas* are appointed through an unauthorized process, disregarding Srila Prabhupada's instruction that the *Acharya* has to be *"authorized by his predecessor spiritual master."*

Any one who has raised the question of how they have become *Acharyas* without authorization by Srila Prabhupada have been dealt with unceremoniously by the ISKCON Governing Body Commission which is dominated by the self-proclaimed *Acharyas*. Those ISKCON devotees who questioned the self appointed Acharya system have been marginalized, sometimes abused, sometimes expelled from the ISKCON society and on some occasions even murdered! We recount several case studies of how the ISKCON Governing Body Commission has dealt with this issue in the last few decades.

How has ISKCON dealt with anyone who has raised the question about the unauthorized self-appointed *Acharya* system?

Case study 1: Jadurani DD

Artist: Jadurani Devi Dasi, 1977

Jadurani DD, Judy Koslofsky, an art student in New York City, joined the ISKCON temple in the mid sixties. She created some of the most remarkable paintings of Krishna used extensively in ISKCON publications, even today. Later she moved to Los Angeles ISKCON Temple and was working as an illustrator for the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (the book publishing trust that Srila Prabhupada established).

At this time, one of her god-brothers (Srila Prabhupada's disciple) explained to her that Srila Prabhupada had appointed only *rittviks* or Officiating *Acharyas* contrary to what the *gurus* were claiming. After studying the transcriptions of the recorded conversations during Srila Prabhupada's last days in Vrindavan, she became convinced that *"these* ***gurus*** *were bogus; and they have stolen Srila Prabhupada's Movement."* She began to speak openly to the devotees in LA temple,

Nandini DD (Nori J Muster), an eye witness to the incident reports: *"Upstairs in the LA temple balcony, one morning, I heard a woman screaming outside. I ran to the window and saw two men chasing Jadurani down Watseka Avenue, toward the traffic on Venice Boulevard. The first grabbed her white sari, which was falling from her shoulder. The other tackled her and held her down on the sidewalk while another man opened the door of a waiting car. They forced her and the car sped away. I ran outside as devotees gathered on the street and learned that Jadurani had been ejected for blaspheming Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami (one of the eleven self-appointed* ***Acharyas****), saying that he wasn't a "real"* ***guru*** *like Prabhupada."*
- *'Betrayal of the Spirit* (pg. 85)' by Nori Muster, University of Illinois Press

Rameshvara Swami (one of the self-appointed *Acharyas*) staying in Los Angeles had ordered Jadurani to be exiled. She then took shelter of a friend-devotee in Pittsburgh.

She later went to New Vrindavan, West Virginia to paint some pictures for the temple there. After some time, she again started preaching revolution: that the eleven self-proclaimed *Acharyas* were not bona fide *gurus*, as they had not been authorized by Srila Prabhupada. Kirtanananda Swami, (one of the self- appointed *Acharyas* overseeing the New Vrindavan temple) who heard of Jadurani's outspoken rhetoric, told his two overzealous female disciples, Isani and Paryani DD, *"Do the needful, but don't tell me about it."*

The next day the two women attacked Jadurani without warning, behind the temple and knocked her down. They kicked her in the head, shattering her glasses. Then they jumped on her chest and beat her in the face with their fists. Another male devotee walking past the temple heard the screams. He ran around to the back and saw that the two women were beating Jadurani. He rushed over and pulled off the attackers. Blood was pouring down Jadurani's face, blinding her. Isani, one of the attackers, screamed, *"Tear her blood soaked sari and give it to us. We will put up a flagpole. We want to show people what happens when you speak against our* ***guru****, Srila Bhaktipada (the honorific title given to Kirtanananda Swami by his disciples)"*

(Excerpts from *'Los Angeles Times'* reporting the beating incident, Feb 15th, 1981 and from the book, *'Guru Business'* by Sulochana Dasa)

Case study 2: Sulochana Dasa

The most severe response for this questioning of the self-appointed *Acharya* system was in 1986. Sulochana Dasa, one of the disciples of Srila Prabhupada, criticized the self-appointed *Acharya* system and started gathering evidence on what Srila Prabhupada had intended for his ISKCON society from his letters and recorded conversations. He was compiling his findings into a book titled, *'The Guru Business'*. When he was working on the last chapter of his book, one day in 1986, not very far from the ISKCON temple in Los Angeles, Sulochana Dasa was shot at point-blank range on the direction of one of the self-proclaimed *Acharyas*, Kirtanananda Swami[2] Later Kirtanananda Swami was convicted in 1991 and sent to prison in North Carolina to serve a thirty year sentence.[3]

Case study 3: Adhridharan Dasa

Adhridharan Dasa, Sunil Awatramani, came in touch with ISKCON in 1975 when he was a student in Miami, Florida. He soon joined ISKCON and later Srila Prabhupada appointed him as the Temple President of ISKCON, Calcutta. He too became aware of the self-tappointed *gurus* in ISKCON. He was also aware of the potential risks of speaking out the truth openly. Hence he remained silent for some time.

In 1998 he began speaking vociferously about the flawed *guru* system in ISKCON along with Madhu Pandit Dasa, the Temple President of ISKCON, Bangalore. In 1999, the Governing Body Commission expelled him from the ISKCON society. A group of about 250 hired men, disguised as ISKCON devotees, armed with sticks, choppers, knives and hammers mobbed the temple in Calcutta and physically threw Adridharan Dasa out of the temple. The group of devotees acting under the direction of ISKCON-Mumbai, took control of the temple forcefully, doctored the accounting documents, fabricated a false case of misappropriation of funds, complained to the Calcutta Police and brought an arrest warrant against him! Adridharan Dasa hails from a respectable family and was the ISKCON Temple President in Calcutta for over twenty years with no history of mis appropriation of funds. But over night he was branded an undesirable element of ISKCON to be dispensed with!

Case study 4: Devotees of ISKCON Bangalore

In 1998, the devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore for the first time came in touch with the institutional directive issued by Srila Prabhupada four months prior to his passing away 1977, outlining the system of conducting initiation through the *rittviks* or Officiating *Acharyas*. ISKCON-Bangalore consisted of about 75 devotees at that time and a good number of them were educated in reputed Indian colleges and universities including IITs and IISc.

Madhu Pandit Dasa, a civil engineering graduate from the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, was impressed by the books of Srila Prabhupada and later in 1981, while still doing his M.Tech, he joined ISKCON. He soon became the Temple President of ISKCON-Bangalore. Under his leadership, the small temple with about five devotees operating out of a rented two bedroom house in an obscure location off Chord Road, Rajajinagar, Bangalore, has now grown to become an iconic temple with hundreds of dedicated missionary devotees.

In 1998 the devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore first came to know of the disobedience of Srila Prabhupada's directions that have become deep rooted in ISKCON movement with regard to the *Guru* system. Soon after that, the devotees fiercely debated among themselves to ascertain the veracity of the *rittviks* or Officiating *Acharyas* system. When they were convinced that that was the system intended by Srila Prabhupada for his movement, they declared to the world that they would not accept the self-appointed *guru* system.

In February 1999, Madhu Pandit Dasa and Adhridharan Dasa, then Temple President of ISKCON-Calcutta, prepared an elaborate Powerpoint presentation went to Mayapur, West Bengal, to present the arguments before the Governing Body Commission. Madhu Pandit Dasa made a presentation before a gathering of 37 Governing Body Commissioners. The deliberations did not last for more than 45 minutes. The next day the GBCs resolved that Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chanchalapathi Dasa, Vice President of ISKCON-Bangalore and Adridharan Dasa were unfit and hence they should be expelled from ISKCON!

The Rulers, the Accused and the Judges are all the same!

It is interesting to study the composition of the 37-member Governing Body Commission that took the decision on expulsion. Out of 37 members, 32 members were playing the role of self-appointed *Acharyas*. And Madhu Pandit Dasa and Adridharan Dasa were questioning how they became *Acharyas* when Srila Prabhupada had only appointed the *rittviks* or Officiating *Acharyas* to conduct future initiations! The accused, the rulers and judges were all the same group of persons. How can one hope to get justice in such a system!!

The devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore under the direction of Madhu Pandit Dasa, have taken up the struggle to fight this disobedience of Srila Prabhupada's directions. In 1998 the devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore challenged the wrong *Acharya* system and formally declared to the Governing Body Commission that they shall only follow Srila Prabhupada's directions on the *Acharya* system and implement what he intended for the ISKCON society.

Since then the Governing Body Commission has been using the devotees of ISKCON- Mumbai to unleash a series of vicious attacks on Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa and the various projects of ISKCON-Bangalore. The devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore have also been enduring different kinds of maligning propaganda among the supporters of ISKCON-Mumbai which has been further intensified in recent times. Their technique has to been to divert the attention of the supporters of ISKCON-Bangalore from the real issue which is the flawed *guru* system.

What was Srila Prabhupada's plan for initiation in ISKCON after his time? Who will be the *Acharya* in ISKCON after Srila Prabhupada's time? These are the issues that have led to the on going law suit between ISKCON-Bangalore and ISKCON-Mumbai.

The maligning campaign that agents of ISKCON-Mumbai have hurled is that the court cases filed by ISKCON Bangalore are a veiled attempt by Madhu Pandit Dasa to retain unchallenged control on the properties of ISKCON-Bangalore. The sacred objective of the struggle to follow the will of the beloved spiritual master has been side stepped and a mundane intention has been projected as the real intention of the devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore.

To demonstrate our earnestness in this struggle to implement Srila Prabhupada's directions in ISKCON about the *Acharya* system and to put to rest any speculations of our intentions, the devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore have offered a Peace Proposal to the International Governing Body Commission. As part of this proposal, the devotees of ISKCON-Bangalore have offered to subordinate themselves and offer all the properties of ISKCON-Bangalore under the control of the International GBC if the ISKCON-Bangalore group of temples are permitted to follow the *Acharya* system that Srila Prabhupada outlined in the July 9th 1977 directive. (Read the sections Peace Proposal and Explanatory Notes of the Peace Proposal.)

We earnestly pray that Srila Prabhupada, our beloved spiritual master, shall always guide us and protect us in our struggle to follow his will.

Authorization is important to become a *Guru*

The following quotes from Srila Prabhupada's writings reveal the importance of authorization to become a spiritual master:

1. *"**Guru cannot be self-made. No. There is no such single instance throughout the whole Vedic literature.** And nowadays, so many rascals, they are becoming **guru** without any authority. That is not **guru. You must be authorized.** Evaṁ parampará-práptam imaṁ rá... As soon as the parampara is lost, sa káleneha mahatá yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa, immediately finished. The spiritual potency finished. You can dress like a **guru**, you can talk big, big words, but it will never be effective."* (*Lecture - Feb 27th, 1977, Mayapur*)

   Note: how emphatically Srila Prabhupada says, *"...There is no such single instance throughout the whole Vedic literature."*

2. *"The conclusion is that a spiritual master who is authorized and empowered by Krishna and his own **guru** should be considered as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. That is the verdict of Visvanatha Chakravarti: sākṣād dharitvenaśā."* (*CC Madhya 10.136*)

   Notes: Please note the words *"his own **guru**."*

3. *"The spiritual master must never be carried away by an accumulation of wealth or a large number of followers. A bona fide spiritual master will never become like that. But sometimes, **if a spiritual master is not properly authorized and only on his own initiative becomes a spiritual master,** he may be carried away by an accumulation of wealth and large numbers of disciples. His is not a very high grade of devotional service. If a person is carried away by such achievements, then his devotional service becomes slackened. One should therefore strictly adhere to the principles of disciplic succession."*
   (*Nectar of Devotion Ch 14*)

   Notes:

   - Isn't this an explanation of the frequent fall downs of several *gurus* currently happening in ISKCON? It is the case of those who are *"***not properly authorized and only on his own initiative becomes a spiritual master***"*

   - Srila Prabhupada talks of the "**principles of disciplic succession**" which is to be properly authorized and not become a spiritual master on one's own initiative.

   - Please note where Srila Prabhupada says *"**one should therefore strictly adhere** to the principles of disciplic succession."* Are they not guilty of non-adherence to this principle despite Srila Prabhupada's warning to strictly adhere?

4. *"Práptasya kalyāṇa-guṇārṇavasya. So **the spiritual master is not self-made.** It is not that if anyone comes before you and bluffs you that, "I have attained spiritual perfection, and I have realized something by some method." No. The spiritual master, bona fide spiritual master means **he has to receive the power from authority**. Otherwise it is useless. No. It is not that one can become spiritual master overnight. He has to take the power from his spiritual master. Therefore it is called **p**raptasya, **P**raptasya means one who has obtained, one who has got the merciful blessings of his spiritual master.*
   *We should always remember that the spiritual master is in the disciplic succession. The original spiritual master is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He blesses his next disciple, just like Brahmā. Brahmā blesses his next disciple, just like Nārada. Nārada blesses his next disciple, just like Vyāsa. Vyāsa blesses his next disciple, Mādhvācārya. Similarly, the blessing is coming. Just like royal succession — the throne is inherited by disciplic or hereditary succession — similarly, this power from the Supreme Personality of Godhead has to be received. Nobody can preach, nobody can become a spiritual master, without obtaining power from the right source. Therefore the very word, it is stated here, prāptasya. Prāptasya means "one who has obtained." Prāptasya kalyāṇa. What he has obtained? Kalyāṇa. Kalyāṇa means auspiciousness. He has received something which is auspicious for all human kind. Prāptasya kalyāṇa.... Such kind of spiritual master, one has to accept, and vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam, and one has to offer his respectful obeisances to **such authorized spiritual master**."* (*Lecture on Sri Gurvastakam - Jan 2nd, 1969, Los Angeles*)

   Notes: This quote is particularly significant.

5. *"So Sanatana Goswami* is **guru**. *chaitanya mahaprabhu is authorizing him to become **guru**. This is paramparā system. Nobody can become **guru** all of a sudden. Self-made **guru**, that is not **guru**. Here Sanatana Goswami is presented as the disciple, ideal disciple. He is asking, ke āmi kene āmāya jāre tāpa-traya, process how to approach **guru**, how to ask him question. Tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena* [BG 4.34]. *Paripraśna means question. That is also required. But chaitanya mahaprabhu is authorizing him."*
   (*Lecture - July 11th, 1976, New York*)

6. **Indian man:** *When did you become the spiritual leader of Krishna consciousness?*
   Srila Prabhupada: *What is that?*
   Brahmananda: *He's asking when did you become the spiritual leader of Krishna consciousness?*
   Srila Prabhupada: *When my Guru Mahārāja ordered me. This is the guru-paramparā.*
   Indian: Did it...
   Srila Prabhupada: *Try to understand. Don't go very speedily. A **guru** can become **guru** when he's ordered by his **guru**. That's all. Otherwise nobody can become **guru**.*
   Indian woman 2: (Hindi)
   Srila Prabhupada: (Hindi) *Ādhi māṁ prapannam. "I am surrendered to You. Whatever You say, I shall carry out." That's all.*
   Indian man: *When did he tell you to...?*
   Srila Prabhupada: *What is the business, when did he tell me? And why shall I disclose to you? **It is so very insignificant thing** that I have to explain to you?*
   Indian man: *No, I am just curious when...*
   Srila Prabhupada: You should be curious within your limit. You should know that **one can become guru when he is ordered by his guru,** this much.
   (*Lecture - Oct 28th, 1975, Nairobi*)

   Notes: This conversation is also very revealing on the principles of *guru parampara.*

6. *"The process of understanding spiritual or transcendental knowledge from the realized person is not exactly like asking an ordinary question from the schoolmaster. The schoolmasters in the modern days are paid agents for giving some information, but the spiritual master is not a paid agent. **Nor can he impart instruction without being authorized.**"*
   (*Srimad Bhagavatam*, 2.9.43, Purport)

7. *Ātreya Ṛṣi: How many qualifications does a spiritual master have in terms of being a spiritual master?*
   Srila Prabhupada: *One qualification: he is a devotee of God. That's all.*
   Ātreya Ṛṣi: Also is he designated?
   Srila Prabhupada: *Huh?*
   Ātreya Ṛṣi: Does he have to be designated by the former spiritual master? He has to be devotee...
   Srila Prabhupada: *Oh, yes, oh yes.*
   Ātreya Ṛṣi: ...surrendered and designated. That is..., identifies disciplic succession: both surrender and designation.
   (Room Conversation - June 29th, 1972, San Deigo)

Peace Proposal

The Governing Body members of ISKCON-Bangalore have presented a peace proposal with a single intention of ending the dispute between ISKCON- Bangalore and ISKCON-Mumbai so that all the resources, time and energy of devotees are used for the service of Krishna and mankind. This proposal was sent on Feb.4th, 2009 to HH Bhakti Charu Swami, one of the senior members of ISKCON Governing Body Commission.

The peace proposal is as follows:

Feb 4th, 2009

Dear Bhakti Charu Maharaj,

Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Thanks for calling Madhu Pandit Prabhu severaltimes in your efforts to bring in some settlement of the dispute after your meeting with Sravanananda Prabhu in the USA. Besides your efforts, Yasomatinandan Prabhu and recently Shankabrit Prabhu and Amiya Vilas Swami have been desiring that we sit and talk. Also Jagatchandra Prabhu from Cochin whom you know well and one Muralidhar Prabhu from Hubli have been trying to build bridges between the partiesattheground. Twodaysback Shankadhari Prabhu from Madurai also sought a sitting with a few of our governing body members to move in the direction of some settlement.

Madhu Pandit Prabhu had sent you a proposal by email after speaking to you in Bombay for which so far we have not received any response. That proposal did not envisage handing over all the properties under us to the control and ownership of the GBC but was a 'live and let live' proposal. Hence in the wake of these several further indications for a compromise we are responding with a second proposal where all properties also will be subordinated to the control of GBC.

The Governing Body Council of the ISKCON Bangalore group of temples/trusts/institutions (hereafter referred to as IB group) which was recently elected as per Srila Prabhupada's "Direction of Management", discussed at length and has the following offer to the GBC. This offer is made whether we win or lose in the current court battle for control of Bangalore temple lest it be thought that this offer is made under pressure of losing and is open forminimum 45 days (only 24 days left for court verdict tocome) and maximum as much as and if extended by us at the end of 45 days.

Offer:

We will subordinate our entire group of organizations with all its properties legally under the direct control of GBC Body (not to ISKCON Mumbai) on par with other ISKCON temples around the world or in any manner GBC decides. But the group will continue to maintain managerial, functional and structural independence as it is existing now and the elected body of IB group of temples will manage these trusts/societies/institutions and its properties. The GBC shall have full freedom to independently audit the accounts of the IB group. The GBC shall unleash legal control only in caseof financial impropriety with regard to the properties managed by the elected body of the IBGroup legally under the GBC provided:

- The GBC rescinds the resolution that system of initiation through officiating *acharya* system after Srila Prabhupada's *Samadhi*, as per July 9th, 1977 directive issued by Srila Prabhupada, is a deviant doctrine/practice.
- GBC passes a resolution that the officiating *acharya* system as per July 9th, 1977 doctrinecan bepracticedby the IB group. A committee of best lawyers in the country from both sides shall approve the legal effectiveness of its IRREVERSIBILITY and continued ADHERENCE by GBC. (Both these have to be done in a sound manner so that the GBC cannot go back on it after transferring legal control over properties currently held by the IB group.)

- IB group will expand its preaching through its temples by co-existing with present temples at a respectable distance from each other, both locationally and philosophically. The nomenclature of these temples can be different to distinguish then from existing ISKCON temples. These new temples opened by IB group will work directly under the elected body of the IB group, which in turn will legally subordinate itself to the larger GBC.

- No criticism in public of each other is permitted. Debates and discussion on mutually accepted topics can be pursued in approved forums with the objective of further narrowing down the differences over a period of time. Jointly pre-approved statements of conviction of each group and differences will alone be stated to the public, by the rank and file devotees of both parties. For the outside world there will be only two different groups who think differently on what Srila Prabhupada desired for spiritual succession.

- Mumbai ISKCON and all ISKCON temples/projects/trusts/funds in the world should also subordinate themselves legally to the control of GBC in the same manner expected of from IB group. HH Radhanath Swami's organization/trusts/funds also should legally come under the control of GBC.

- GBC should perpetuate itself through elections by electing new GBC members from among the temple presidents all over the world every three years as per the "Direction of Management" issued by Srila Prabhupada in 1970.

- Elected representatives from among IB group temple presidents should also be given proportionate representation in the GBC based on number of IB group temples approved by the IB group and the GBC. IB group will elect them and fill up those allotted number of the GBC position for IB group.

- There shall be *Guru puja* and *Vyasa puja* only for Srila Prabhupada in all ISKCON temples. All persons who preside over the initiations should be called 'Officiating *Acharya*' in both camps. Then the only difference in two camps are that one camp hold that the new initiates are disciples of person presiding over the initiation, and the other camp holds that the new initiates are Srila Prabhupada's disciples. For the outside world it is only a different understanding of 'officiating *acharya*'. Officiating *Acharya* was the unambiguos nomenclature ordered by Srila Prabhupada for those who were to perform initiation in ISKCON in his conversationon May 28th, 1977 when the GBC representatives met Srila Prabhupada with a specific question on initiations "particularly when you are no longer with us."

- All the leaders of IB group and ISKCON should declare their personal assets to the GBC body every three years starting immediately through signed affidavits. (IB group leaders have already done it and even published in leading newspapers of Bangalore.)

- BBT shall promote original unchanged edition of all Srila Prabhupada's books that existed before the *samadhi* of Srila Prabhupada by supply to all their customers who place orders and supply changed versions only on specific requestofcustomers. The current practice is reverse of this. Just a change with regardto which edition BBT will actively promote.

- All fight ends and in parallel we expand preaching under a single GBC body as Srila Prabhupada wanted.

Looking forward for the GBC response at the earliest. Best wishes,

Yourservants in service of Srila Prabhupada/Members of Governing Body of IB group. Amitasana Dasa, Chitranga Chaitanya Dasa, Chanchalapati Dasa, Jai Chaitanya Dasa, Madhu Pandit Dasa, Rajiv Lochan Dasa, Satya Gourachandra Dasa, Stoka Krishna Dasa, Suvyakta Narasimha Dasa, Vasudev Keshava Dasa.

Additional Explanatory Notes on Peace Proposal by Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa

The Chairman and Executive Committee Members and GBC members, Mayapur

Dear Maharaja/Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

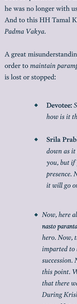
Further to our offer of a peace proposal (attached separately) sent thru HH Bhakti Charu Swami on February 4th 2009, we present before you the following explanatory note on the same:

The court case between ISKCON-Bangalore and ISKCON-Mumbai is coming to a close as the trial is over and case is posted for judgement on 28th February. Regardless of which side wins, the loser will appeal to the next court level. This will go on until it reaches the Supreme Court of India. Who knows how long this whole process will take, how much resources will be drained and how much time wasted. With this in mind, and with the supreme objective of continuing successful preaching for the satisfaction of HDG Srila Prabhupada, the Elected Governing Body of ISKCON Bangalore group of institutions has brought a peace proposal to the table.

This proposal was sent to HH Bhakti Charu Swami for delivery to the rest of the GBC. So far we have only received silence from HH Bhakti Charu Swami and the GBC to our offer. And the GBC meetings are getting over in few days. Under these circumstances we are making this offer public along with this Explanatory Note to Chakra, VNN, Sampradaya Sun, Dandavats and other Vaishnava sites hoping it would attract the attention of the GBC members and other Vaishnavas who are closely watching this war between ISKCON Mumbai and ISKCON Bangalore.

Our dispute with the GBC began in 1998 when we came across Srila Prabhupada's last written directive on initiation in ISKCON, famously known as the July 9th directive.

Year after year, from the early 80s we have heard from the dais of every Annual *Ratha Yatra* inauguration at Bangalore and every other public program, HH Jayapataka Swami being introduced as one of the eleven successor *Acharyas* appointed by Srila Prabhupada. Prior to 1998, being isolated in Bangalore and hardly exposed to international issues and being busy with building the temple at Bangalore, we all blindly believed the propaganda that the eleven persons had the sacrosanct appointment by Srila Prabhupada as the successor *Acharyas*. In fact the title of HH Jayapataka Swami was, Present *Acharya*.



However we were shocked each time one of the eleven *Acharyas* fell down from grace, and this posed a big disturbing question as to why these persons, if they have been appointed by the pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada, are falling down? But the July 9th Directive answered our perpetual doubt about *gurus* fall down. They were never appointed by Srila Prabhupada but were appointed only as *rtvik*s or Representative of the *Acharya*. More than anything was the deep pain in us for having become victims of this betrayal of trust.

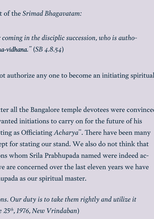
It is a matter of undisputed evidence that several of the GBC members approached Srila Prabhupada on May 28th 1977 with a set of questions to be asked to him. One such question was, how first and second initiation would go on particularly when he was no longer with us. Srila Prabhupada's immediate reply was, "I will appoint some of you to act as Officiating *Acharya*." And to this HH Tamal Krishna Maharaj said, "*Rtvik Acharya*!" and Srila Prabhupada said, "Yes *rtvik*". This is *Guru Mukha Padma Vakya*.

A great misunderstanding has been perpetrated in ISKCON that the *parampara* will be lost if we had a *rtvik* system and in order to maintain *parampara* we must have living initiating gurus. But Srila Prabhupada says differently on when parampara is lost or stopped:

- **Devotee:** *Srila Prabhupada, if the knowledge was handed down by the saintly kings,* ***evam parampara-praptam****, how is it that the knowledge was lost?*

- **Srila Prabhupada:***"When it was not handed down. Simply understood by speculation. Or if it is not handed down as it is. They might have made some changes. Or they did not hand it down. Suppose I handed it down to you, but if you do not do that, then it is lost. Now the Krishna consciousness movement is going on in my presence. Now after my departure, if you do not do this, then it is lost. If you go on as you are doing now, then it will go on."* (Room conversations - May 9th , 1975, Perth)

- *Now, here also it is stated,* **sa kalaneha mahata yogo nasto parantapa:** *"My dear Arjuna, oh, you are the great hero. Now, that* **Bhagavad-gita***, the instruction which I imparted to the sun-god, was coming by disciplic succession. Now it is lost." Now, we have to note down this point. Why it is lost? Why it is lost? Do you think that there was no learned man during that time? During Krishna's time? Oh, there were many learned sages. Not only one, two, there were dozens of learned sages. But still, the Lord said, Krishna said, that "They... That knowledge which I exactly imparted to sun-god is now lost." How it is lost? There were many scholars, and still, how it is lost? The lost means that the purport of* **Bhagavad-gita** *is lost. (Gita lecture - July 13th, 1966, New York)*



We have dozens of quotes on this subject that shows how and when *parampara* is lost, which requires a careful study. This is not the *parampara* of physical arts and crafts like music or massage therapy or wrestling - which requires a physical link of teacher and disciple to keep it going. We are talking of spiritual knowledge whose transmission, as repeatedly taught by Srila Prabhupada, does not depend on physical presence. Srila Prabhupada has set up an institution of preachers who, if they continue to speak what ever Srila Prabhupada has taught as it is, will continue the *parampara*.

Another standard objection about rtvik system is that it is historically unprecedented. We have prepared a list of over a dozen things that Srila Prabhupada did that are historically unprecedented and would be considered unacceptable even by other Indian Vaishnava traditions. And Srila Prabhupada has said this about an *Acharya*:

- *"Lord chaitanya Mahaprabhu wanted to invent a way to capture the* **Mayavadis** *and others who did not take interest in the Krishna consciousness movement. This is the symptom of an* **Acharya**. *An* **Acharya** *who comes for the service of the Lord cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means by which Krishna consciousness may be spread." (CC Adi 7.33)*

- *"So therefore it depends on the* **Acharya** *how to adjust things. So, my* **Guru Maharja***, 'Alright go on preaching on a motorcar, it doesn't matter'... This is adjustment. The* **Acharya** *knows how to adjust things."* (SB class - Feb 20th, 1973, Auckland)

And the most definitive direction on this subject is found in the purport of the *Srimad Bhagavatam:*

- *One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, who is authorized by his predecessor spiritual master. This is called* **diksha-vidhana.***" (SB 4.8.54)*

And now it is a historically established fact that Srila Prabhupada did not authorize any one to become an initiating spiritual master.

Based on these and several instructions of Srila Prabhupada on this matter all the Bangalore temple devotees were convinced that the Officiating *Acharya* system was and is how Srila Prabhupada wanted initiations to carry on for the future of his movement through *Rtviks*, or Officiators of the *Acharya*, or persons "acting as Officiating *Acharya*". There have been many debates over this July 9th directive which we will not get into here except for stating our stand. We also do not think that the Officiating *Acharyas* are just brahminical priests as the eleven persons whom Srila Prabhupada named were indeed accomplished leaders who contributed to expand the movement. As far we are concerned over the last eleven years we have taken this directive to our heart and soul and have accepted Srila Prabhupada as our spiritual master.

- *So we have got everything in writing, in books, in instructions. Our duty is to take them rightly and utilize it properly, advance in Krishna consciousness.* (SB class - June 25th, 1976, New Vrindaban)

Srila Prabhupada writes in a letter:

- *"They misunderstand me. Unless it is there from me in writing, there are so many things that Prabhupada said."(Letter to Omkara-devi dasi, Sep 2nd, 1975.)*

So we know that what is written (and signed) by Srila Prabhupada is final.

With this faith in the words of our Spiritual Master Srila Prabhupada we have been engaging successfully in expanding his preachingmissionbyopeningseveral centers all over India, and distributing the Holy Name, Books and *prasadam* from these centers to millions of conditioned souls. From when the time the dispute began and we were 60 full time devotees, now we are a community of over 275 full time devotees in 14 locations.

With the assistance of the devotees of ISKCON Bangalore, our congregation, outside supporters, visitors - all of us together, with the grace of Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Radha KrishnaChandra, havemadethetempleand all of its preaching efforts a continual success, even in the face of the most vicious adversity. The GBC is very well aware of the recent history of adversity and maligning campaign that we have been facing, were we are called thieves and frauds, perpetrated by our opponents (ISKCON Mumbai) under the authorization of the GBC because of the court case against them. All of this I do not wish to list here to keep the mood positive. We can proudly say that we have tolerated it for a decade without retaliation and can safely say that we have never attacked ISKCON anywhereexceptafewmonthsback wherwe brought out a booklet *"Struggle for Truth."* (We took this step as agents of ISKCON Mumbai stole the database of 40,000 donors of ISKCON Bangalore from the temple and mailed a booklet entitled *Fraud of Madhu Pandit Dasa*. We were always careful, in spite of all the provocations, not to burn the bridges with the GBC, with a hope to work some day under a strong united GBC. In spite of our struggle against these obstacles, we have carried out our devotional services to Srila Prabhupada to expand Krishna consciousness movement in India.

We can only imagine what the results of our efforts and resources would have been if we were permitted to expend them all on preaching, and not on defending the maligned attacks on us in the last decade.

Here is additional explanation of our proposal (attached along with):

- We want to work under one single world wide GBC.

- But we should be respectably allowed to practice the Officiating *Acharya* system within our group.

- Once we are under the GBC and as long as the law on ban of *rtvik* doctrine exists, we cannot practice the same under their authority except as hiding fugitives. We did not put up all these struggles to get that compromised status. What we are looking for is GBC permitting to practice the same only within our group, and obviously this cannot happen as long as the GBC is holding that it is a 'deviant'doctrine. Wedontwantobeunder a body that does not accept us to have Srila Prabhupada as our spiritual master, both diksha and siksha, as we are practicing now. That cannot happen without them repealing the law on *rtvik*. This is the crux of the issue. Not the property, at least for us. If they accept clearly, unambiguously and honestly that *rtvik* vsystem can be practiced in our group of temples, we are prepared to flex in many different manners to bring all the properties under the control of the GBC on par with other ISKCON temples in the world.

There are three letters of Oct and Nov 1974, to show that Srila Prabhupada directed certain devotees to register a separate society in Calcutta by the name "International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Calcutta" under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, although that instruction was not carried out. HH Jayapataka Swami was named as one of the Trustees too in that document. When the movement had just begun in 1972, Srila Prabhupada naturally considered Bombay as the headquarters and wanted all the funds in India to be sent to Bombay for centralizing and in return all bills to be paid from Bombay. He wrote so in a letter in early 1972. But there is absolutely no evidence of it having functioned in this manner. Srila Prabhupada was so much against centralization as we see in April 1972 when he disbanded the entire GBC when an attempt was made by some of the GBC members to centralize ISKCON management all over the world. (ref series of letters/telegrams that Srila Prabhupada wrote in April 1972).

If all the properties in India were to be controlled by the single trustee group of Mumbai society, i.e., Bureau, then why did Srila Prabhupada in his Will in 1977 not say so? On the contrary, Srila Prabhupada in his Will has appointed separate groups of three or more property trustees for each of the major properties in India. On the other hand, for India Srila Prabhupada could have just said, "...the Bureau is there."

In addition, in Srila Prabhupada's Will he even says that if one of them resign or die in any of those three of more trustee groups then the others will co-opt a new person as long as he is an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada. Will is not a letter but a legal document. Only if the rtvik system is practiced can there be initiated disciples of Srila Prabhupada, say fifty years from now. Otherwise according to the Will all the properties would have to go to the government control as there will be no more initiated disciples of Srila Prabhupada to act as trustees. How does GBC answer these facts on Srila Prabhupada's Will satisfactorily? Are they not obligated to honor the Will of Srila Prabhupada? Or at least give an explanation?

Why did Srila Prabhupada appoint separate property trustee groups for the India properties when the Bureau of Bombay Society was existing? We all know many things have happened in ISKCON during and after Srila Prabhupada's life time, which were not according to his exact written direction. The fact is that these written directions exist today, and we can try to follow it unless the author, Srila Prabhupada, annulled such directions through another written document of equal weight.

Shankabrit Dasa as President, Ananta Padmanabha Dasa as Vice President, Amiya Vilas Dasa (now Amiya Vilas Swami) as Secretary and Poorna Brahma Dasa as Treasurer and Bhakta Dasa jointly with two others registered a separate society at Bangalore in 1978 by the name International Society for Krishna Consciousness under the direct instructions of the then HH Hamsadutta Swami , who was the then GBC for South India. Hence it cannot be said that the society has come into existence clandestinely by the collusion of all these people without the knowledge of the GBC. Recently this has been confirmed by Hamsadutta Prabhu through an affidavit given to us for the court case. Several allegations and arguments have been placed before the court by ISKCON Mumbai that Bangalore Society is a bogus imposter Society, etc. etc., and I have committed fraud to make ISKCON Bangalore and its properties independent of ISKCON Mumbai. In any case this is the crux of the case and these things are matters before the court and the court will decide these matters based on the evidence and arguments placed by both parties. (By the way, I joined ISKCON only in 1981, three years after ISKCON-Bangalore society came into existence).

It was H.H. Jayapataka Swami who directed me in the 1980s to approach Shankabrit Prabhu. He told me that he did not have a good relation with Shankabrit and hence I should try it myself and do the needful to formalize the handing over of the management of ISKCON Bangalore Society to me. Subsequently I contacted Shankabrit Prabhu in Tirupati as per the above direction of His Holiness Jayapataka Swami and that is how I became the President of Karnataka Society after Shankabrit Prabhu resigned. Probably HH Jayapataka Swami remembered Srila Prabhupada's letter regarding his intention to register a separate society in Calcutta and that is why he directed me so without batting an eyelid.

The very first line of Srila Prabhupada's Will also says, "GBC is the Ultimate Managing Authority". But ISKCON Bombay took a stand in the court that it only exists for spiritual guidance. I had told my lawyers that GBC is the ultimate body though legally it has never been tied up properly. Otherwise where and how is the entire movement tied up as one? If they would have taken the right stand that GBC is the ultimate managing authority, we would have agreed to it, and would, of course, say that in this case they are not a party to this suit. And later if a fresh suit were filed by the GBC on the basis of such admission by us, we would have acceded control to it but would have argued that the real GBC would have to be formed by election of Temple Presidents as per Direction of Management. That was our plan if they had admitted the Ultimate Managing Authority of GBC. Obviously for this case such admission by them would have been fatal for them and so they said that GBC has only spiritual overseeing power over the temples.

In other words, we have always been willing to work under the properly elected GBC.

Therefore we want to work under an ISKCON which, at the least puts these things in right perspective. That is the reason, we say, that we want to subordinate ourselves to the GBC and not to ISKCON Mumbai Bureau. In fact all ISKCON temples and institutions should incorporate amendments to give ultimate control to the GBC body. You can imagine, a body having such huge control over the properties, will be a very powerful body unlike present GBC which is toothless against protecting the properties of the movement. Why not have such a powerful body if that is what a united movement means, as long as that body is an elected one which will automatically limit power corruption. Holding ultimate control of properties of the independent legal constituents of the movement by the GBC does not mean centralizing management or the GBC interfering with it.

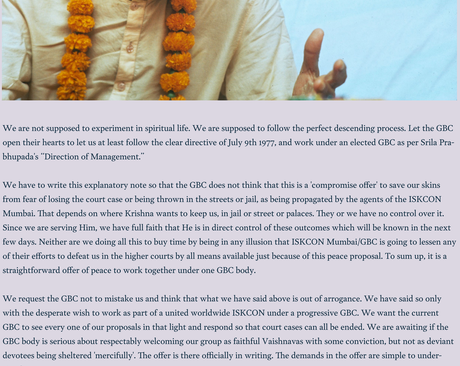
his idea of election is not a concoction and this was conceived by Srila Prabhupada himself in the year 1970 itself and made into a legal document "Direction of Management (DoM)." It is through this document that the GBC was brought into existence by Srila Prabhupada for the first time. In DoM, Srila Prabhupada gives directions on how ISKCON should be managed especially after his life time. Further in July 22, 1974 Srila Prabhupada wanted certain amendments to be made to incorporate the concept of GBC appointed as per DoM into "all official registration documents, constitutions, incorporation papers, etc." on TOPMOST URGENCY basis. Hence we see that Srila Prabhupada wanted the concept of control by an elected GBC body according to DoM to be enshrined into all independent legal constituents of the entire movement.

In the DoM every three years election is suggested from amongst the Temple Presidents to make up the GBC body, along with one third old members for continuity's sake. You cannot talk of institutional control and have a loose institutional control mechanism unable to check everyone at all levels - from the GBC, as a group, to individual GBC members to every single member of the society. Corruption of power can happen at all levels. An organizational structure that will protect the institution from perpetuating such corruption is what Srila Prabhupada has envisioned. Without such control the GBC is fully autocratic. Neither the extremes of autocracy nor the extremes of democracy are good. Srila Prabhupada did not say the GBC has to be elected by all the members of the society, but by the Temple Presidents who are knowledgeable. So it is not fully democratic, yet the essence of democracy wherein responsible and qualified leaders in the movement are allowed to choose who they will be governed by is intact. This keeps the topmost Governing Body from becoming permanently corrupted with favoritism, individualism and autocracy. In this age of Kali whether it is an individual or a group of individuals, total autocracy is not healthy. Yet individual authority and empowerment of Temple Presidents are also to be encouraged with in healthy limits for organizational growth. Today the GBC as a body is a permanent, static and unquestioned authority. And that is why no real reforms can happen. This is the reason why, in our proposal, we want to subordinate all our properties to the control of a GBC which agrees to adopt Srila Prabhupada's DoM.

In any case, today ISKCON is full of *guru* groups. Let us not hide this fact: in Mumbai two distinct groups co exists. One is HH Radhanath Swami's disciples and other is predominantly HH Gopal Krishna Goswami's disciples and others. And we are asking, let us also be just another group and grow independently but under the GBC with due representation in the GBC for our group.

So you see our proposal is an integrated one involving an organizationally reformed GBC. Of course if *rtvik* is allowed by the GBC (not Bureau) then the beginning of our integration is done. It is said, something well begun is half done. I request the GBC to evaluate the proposal in the interest of the whole movement. Actually there is no negotiation from our side except for the *rtvik* issue. We want the intelligent people in the movement to think why each of the conditions have been put forward. That is why our offer was not based on victory or no victory in the court case. We want to work under one worldwide GBC, but a reformed GBC, not the present flawed one with a track record of historically documented excesses, blunders and faults.

We cannot close this out-of-court settlement by patch up negotiation. The conditions I am asking, except for rtvik issue, are all organizational reforms for the good of a united ISKCON. That is why I am insisting that the GBC involve in discussing this proposal. Our proposal is not thrusting *Rtvik* system on others. But if we have to work under the GBC we have to be whole heartedly accepted. We would also want to be proud of being part of the united ISKCON movement. ISKCON as it stands currently, without election as per DoM, is headed by an autocratic body dominated by *gurus*. Weobviouslywillnot-subordinateour institution and properties to such a body.



Regarding financial transparency, we are willing, as a group to subject ourselves to all scrutiny, which anyway GBC will have the authority to when we subordinate ourselves to them. However we would want all temples and institutions of the organization to follow the same level of transparency, starting from international BBT. There cannot be two different standards. We desire even higher standards of professional quality of transparency than what exists now within our group, but want to see that the rest of ISKCON also follows the same. This is to make the outside world look at our organization with high degree of credibility. Our group wishes to integrate itself as a healthy creative partner and not that you ask transparency from us as if weareall'thieves'. Wecannotbeapproached with the mood that, "We who are in the house are honest and hence need not worry about transparency. Only you 'thieves' have to be transparent!"

Can we honorably sit with the GBC and discuss all this? We think this is the GBC's duty. If they shirk, then it is the usual flaw manifested again, of a non elected autocratic group, as there is no one to question them on this neglect of duty to Srila Prabhupada at the highest organizational level when such an offerisplacedbeforethem. TheLawofKarma will act not only for one's action, but also for inaction. We are crying in the wilderness to the GBC, "Please take us under your wings." But according to GBC our only defect is we are "hard core dedicated disciples of Srila Prabhupada!" What an irony!! But we have shown a way, without rocking their 'boat of spiritual masters and disciples', by which we can be accommodated as a distinct group so that we can all expand the movement under a united and reformed GBC.

Do not mistake us that we are asking the GBC members to reform individually. That is not within our purview. We are seeking only organizational reform through election as per SrilaPrabhupada's DoM. We preach that Srila Prabhupada built a house where the whole world can live. Let the GBC first demonstrate that by expanding their house a little to accommodate the sincere followers of the very founder of the movement. Till then this ISKCON is not Srila Prabhupada's house nor the GBC Prabhupada's GBC, but the houses of the *gurus* and a GBC body of *gurus*. The GBC has assumed a right upon themselves to experiment (played around with spiritual and material lives of thousands of souls in the last 30 years) with various theories of *gurus*: Zonal *Acharyas*, *Maha-bhagavata gurus* till found fallen, GBC appointed *gurus*, voted- in *gurus*, No-objection *gurus*, suspended *gurus*, re initiating gurus - (except acting as Officiating *Acharya*). Even morally GBC is bound to accommodate us as respectably as you have accommodated the '*gurus* and disciples' of all the above flawed *guru* systems according to GBC's own admissions after each experiment failed.

We are not supposed to experiment in spiritual life. We are supposed to follow the perfect descending process. Let the GBC open their hearts to let us at least follow the clear directive of July 9th 1977, and work under an elected GBC as per Srila Prabhupada's "Direction of Management."

We have to write this explanatory note so that the GBC does not think that this is a 'compromise offer' to save our skins from fear of losing the court case or being thrown in the streets or jail, as being propagated by the agents of the ISKCON Mumbai. That depends on where Krishna wants to keep us, in jail or street or palaces. They or we have no control over it. Since we are serving Him, we have full faith that He is in direct control of these outcomes which will be known in the next few days. Neither are we doing all this to buy time by being in any illusion that ISKCON Mumbai/GBC is going to lessen any of their efforts to defeat us in the higher courts by all means available just because of this peace proposal. To sum up, it is a straightforward offer of peace to work together under one GBC body.

We request the GBC not to mistake us and think that what we have said above is out of arrogance. We have said so only with the desperate wish to work as part of a united worldwide ISKCON under a progressive GBC. We want the current GBC to see every one of our proposals in that light and respond so that court cases can all be ended. We are awaiting if the GBC body is serious about respectably welcoming our group as faithful Vaishnavas with some conviction, but not as deviant devotees being sheltered 'mercifully'. The offer is there officially in writing. The demands in the offer are simple to understand.

Thank you Maharajs and Prabhus.
Your servant in service of Srila Prabhupada, Madhu Pandit Dasa.