Vedic Village Review

Number 14

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder Acharya International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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Editor and Publisher: Nityananda Dasa Adhikari
Co-Editor: Karnamrita Dasa Adhikari

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*Srila Prabhupada, letter to Nityananda dasa, 3/16/77: **"The New Talavan-Review and brochures are both very nicely done and I thank you for them...Please go on very enthusiastically developing your farming community."**

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Editorial Policy

VEDIC VILLAGE REVIEW is meant to promote a better understanding of issues and philosophy vital to Vaishnavas and their preaching work. We apologize for our errors and we hope to continue with the blessings of devotees, open to review from all quarters. Although we may unintentionally upset some by addressing sensitive issues, it is better to generate debate and an exchange of views than to be silent. Complacent and dull-headed we will not be. We want to spark healthy discussion and analysis of topics for the advancement of Srila Prabhupada's mission. We beg pardon for any offenses that may be made in this effort. We invite response to our articles, as we have an open editorial policy. We do reserve the right to edit letters and articles for brevity and conciseness, taking care to preserve the spirit of the opinion. So please, participate in this forum by writing us today!

VVR is printed by NEW JAIPUR PRESS, and attempts to promote the development of "Vedic villages" around the world as the foundation of a new Vedic civilization. God-centered, rural devotional communities such as New Jaipur, Mississippi, are the hope of the future during the Golden Age. These villages will be based on the teachings of Lord Krishna, Lord Chaitanya and His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Address all correspondence to:
VEDIC VILLAGE REVIEW, Post Office Box 127, Washington, Miss. 39190 , USA

TOLL FREE NUMBERS (for brief calls)
1-800-274-2539/1-800-553-8298 (Canada)
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EDITORIAL

by Nityananda dasa

SATYAM EVA JAYATE: *Truth will prevail*. This is VVR's motto, borrowed from India. VVR intends to discuss, debate and provoke thought and change in the Greater ISKCON by periodic publication of a forum for devotees for addressing vital issues relevent to the health and growth of Srila Prabhupada's Krishna consciousness movement. The quest for *siddhanta* is our purpose.

Unfortunately, the ISKCON GBC have slammed shut their door on participating in further discussions and enlightening exchanges. With the publication of their GBC Executive Committee's first issue of *ISKCON Journal* and the resolutions to "expell" the VVR editiors from ISKCON, the GBC declared, in essence, as they have so many times in the past, "There is nothing further to discuss. We have settled the matter. Now you just accept it or get out."

The GBC again has used its power and authority to squelch opposition to (and even inquiry about) their policies, resulting in the departure from official ISKCON of thousands of sincere *Prabhupadanugas*. The GBC thought this kind of "surgery" for ISKCON would protect it from "envious" devotees, since, once the envious party left or was removed from ISKCON, they would fall into *maya* and become impotent, no longer a threat. By misusing their authority to intimidate devotees into "lining up" or leaving, the GBC adopted tactics similar to those found in dictatorships around the world. Ruthlessness was explained as necessary to defend Srila Prabhupada's movement (from his own disciples?).

Now, however, devotees outside ISKCON all over the world are regrouping, reorganizing and rethinking their commitment to Srila Prabhupada's mission of realizing and spreading Krishna consciousness. Gradually devotees on the "outside" are opening centers and increasing their preaching activities, and the ISKCON diaspora of the eighties seems to be leading to the expansion of Greater ISKCON in the nineties. The GBC will come to see that they have succeeded only in turning ISKCON inside out, meaning that they are actually on the outside due to disobeying Srila Prabhupada's instructions, due to offenses against the Vaishnavas and due to *sastra-ninda*, or a twisting of the Vedic philosophy to suit their self-motivated ends.

The GBC has tried to block the devotion aimed at Srila Prabhupada, the principal ISKCON *guru*, by pushing him into the background and the placing "new" gurus in the forefront. Srila Prabhupada must be brought back to the center, his position as the supreme *Acharya* emphasized, and his glories properly enunciated by all ISKCON *gurus* (as in *ritviks*) and leaders, especially the GBC. The GBC disobeyed Srila Prabhupada by premature assumption of the *acharya* title, the successor *acharya* status, the zonal *acharya* principle and by not adopting the *ritvik acharya* system instead. Offenses against the Vaishnavas were countless. Prabhupada was offended by "simultaneous *guru puja*", big worship of little *gurus*, self-appointments and neglect of maintaining Prabhupada's position in ISKCON. Devotees in ISKCON were offended by the forced worship of their Godbrother "*gurus*", thousands being forced to depart ISKCON due to the conduct of the GBC. The Vedic philosophy was bent to justify reinitiation, an *acharya* by vote system, and bogus theories such as that Prabhupada was no longer directly approachable. No open debates were allowed, GBC meetings were closed, and the GBC power elite would control the so-called "research" on various troublesome contradictions between the Vaishnava philosophy and their activities.

It is a shame the GBC cannot read the pulse of ISKCON. There are so many devotees who are dissatisfied. To poll only the few, younger devotees who remain in the temples is to miss the overwhelming sentiment in Greater ISKCON that the GBC has failed. To read the letters to the editior in VVR is an eye-opener. And another trend is now taking shape: that of devotees returning to or bunching up in certain temples where the GBC is practically ignored. In such places like Los Angeles and Gainesville, the GBC is "harmless" due to the majority of devotees there, who are older, experienced in ISKCON's facts of life and not blind followers of the GBC. There are concentrations of devotees in various places that are more or less fed up with the present GBC and *guru* system: in New Jaipur (of course), and in Benelux, Nigeria, Singapore, Russia and Hawaii.

Even the fifty or so members of the GBC are not as "lined-up" with the official GBC line as one might think. The GBC is directed and guided, if not controlled, by the GBC Executive Committee, consisting of a few like-minded souls who steer the course of GBC decisions, policies and meetings. Most GBC members *go along to get along*. For a GBC member to dissent would be to lose his position and service, and this is something all the junior GBC members understand well. Many younger GBC are attached to their service, and are hoping the ISKCON situation will improve if they just cooperate and try to preach, leaving alone the discrepancies they may see in their own GBC policies. No one can expect to become or remain a GBC member unless he adheres to the "mood" of the GBC power structure, composed of the same old-time Zonal Acharyas of years ago that are still in control of ISKCON, namely Tamala Krishna Goswami, Jayapataka Swami, Hridayananda Goswami, Harikesa Swami and their front men such as Sivarama Swami, Bhakticharu Swami, etc., etc.

VVR's editors were made the "monkey on the stick" by the GBC, and our "expulsion" serves as a warning to all GBC's and ISKCON devotees to *tow the line on official GBC policies or else!!*

That brings us to the question: "What are the GBC policies today?" The "official" GBC *guru* philosophy has changed more often than the shifting alliances of countries in medieval Europe. Let's review some of the historical facts:

- Dec. 1977 to Feb. 1978: GBC has no idea what to do
- March 1978: GBC meets, concocts the Successor, *Uttama Acharya* Hoax
- Dec. 1980: Tamala Krishna Goswami repents, exposes the GBC *guru* policies
- Mar. 1981: GBC tries to cover up truth about fallen "*gurus*"
- 1982: Zonal *Acharyas* quarrel openly, competing for disciples
- 1985: GBC begins to accept reforms, increases number of *gurus*
- 1986: Tamala Krishna Goswami performs a *ritvik* initiation with consent of GBC
- 1987: GBC adopts a vote system for making *guru*, rejects

the former philosophy of Successor, Zonal *Acharyas*.

- 1989: GBC says *gurus* now only need to be *madhyama adhikaris*, not *uttamas*, not even liberated *madhyamas*.
- 1990: RESULT: Srila Prabhupada is replaced by "current links"

It is very clear that the GBC was *dead wrong* from 1978 to 1987 about their *guru* philosophy and policies. Yet we are expected to accept with great faith and trust that today's GURU-BY-VOTE system is what Prabhupada wanted. Who would not be a little skeptical of the GBC? Once burned, twice shy. So why does the GBC cling to its mantle of AUTHORITY and LEADERSHIP so stringently without becoming a little humbled by past mistakes and becoming more willing to discuss these issues openly? It will take time, humility and wide participation of devotees to restore trust in our GBC again. VVR says: let's talk about it. GBC says: "You get thrown out for being dangerous to Srila Prabhupada's mission."

Did you ever notice how similar the GBC has been to the KGB? The record of GBC cover-ups is a long one. *Bhavananda* was protected as a *guru* for years, despite full knowledge, including confessions, of his homosexual activities. *Prabhupada's Letters Books*, now a standard and authorized sourcebook for ISKCON, was published secretly due to overwhelming opposition from the GBC. VVR tries to voice the concerns of devotees about the health of ISKCON, and the GBC calls *ritvik-vada* philosophy demoniac and ignores further calls for discussions.

The level of intimidation in ISKCON is very high. There is no place in ISKCON for those who may differ with the GBC. And even though the GBC has made so many errors, coverups and hoaxes in recent history, we are told to just follow their current, new version as perfect nevertheless. Are we mushrooms? To be kept in the dark and fed bull's manure?

I found an interesting quote from Ravindra Swarup Prabhu's 1985 paper, *Under My Order*, where he paraphrased a section from the *Caitanya-Caritamrita*: (We can adjust the words "self-made" to "GBC vote manufactured" and thus keep up with the latest system now in style.)

"Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to conduct missionary activities cooperatively under the authority of a governing body. He did not instruct any particular men to become the next *acharyas*. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of *acharya*. Later, the international society established by Srila Prabhupada degenerated into a homogenous hodge-podge headed by an exclusive CLUB of vote-manufactured *acharyas*, or *gurus* steered by members of the Zonal Acharya Faction. These leaders were *asara*, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master."

The major problems in ISKCON may be as simple as this: the GBC has been corrupted by DADS, the Dreaded Acharya Disease, resulting in an effort to protect individual's positions as *gurus* and a pushing of Srila Prabhupada into the background. The solution may be as simple as the formation of a watchdog, neutral, popularly elected *Brahmana* Board to safeguard against abuses and deviations, and the formulation of an ISKCON Constitution to provide a system of checks and balances within our ecclesiastic structure.

So these are some of my thoughts. What are yours?

Gopala-Krishna Goswami Gave Ritvik Initiation?

as related by Vishnutattva dasa to Yasodanandana dasa

A Mr. Sharma of Toronto, an accountant and Hindu, was following the principles of Krishna consciousness very carefully, and was visiting and contributing to the temple regularly. He always regretted that he did not have the opportunity to take initiation from Srila Prabhupada. His Hindu friend at the temple was Vishnutattva Prabhu. The two would discuss the situation regarding initiations in ISKCON. It was 1985 and Gopala Krishna Goswami was the local ISKCON initiating *guru*. But Mr. Sharma emphatically did not want to take initiation from any of the 'new *gurus*' ;he would only take initiation from Srila Prabhupada. How was it possible, though?

Vishnutattva had lengthy discussions with the Toronto temple president, Viswakarma Prabhu, about Mr. Sharma's sincere desire and plight. Viswakarma Prabhu then made an arrangement with Gopala Krishna Goswami, and Mr. Sharma and Vishnutattva were fully apprised of such. Gopala Krishna Goswami agreed to give initiation to Mr. Sharma ON BEHALF of Srila Prabhupada. Mr. Sharma was thrilled that Srila Prabhupada was to be his initiating *guru*.

On Janmashtami, Gopala Krishna Goswami gave the aforesaid initiation to Mr. Sharma, giving him the name Prabhupada dasa. Vishnutattva, Viswakarma and Mr Sharma all understood at the time that Srila Prabhupada had given the initiation. Drupada Prabhu was also privy to the unique circumstances of Mr. Sharma's initiation, and has verified this story as well. Now, however, in 1990, there are some who question who the actual initiator was. No doubt Gopala Krishna Goswami would deny Vishnutattva Prabhu's account of these events.

The question thus arises as it did with discovery of Tamala Krishna Goswami's RITVIK initiation of Jalatala dasi in Vrindavan 1986: Why are the GBC denouncing the *ritvik-acharya* system for initiations after Srila Prabhupada's departure when they themselves have done them in the past? Granted, they were performed only occasionally, but a *ritvik* initiation performed even once validates the process. So it goes with the GBC, the inconsistency in their actions is confusing.

VVR has been told about another two possible *ritvik* initiations in the years 1977 to 1989, although they have not been confirmed. Krishna dasa Swami was supposedly promised *sannyasa* by Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada departed before fulfilling his promise, however, and thus Jayatirtha Prabhu, as a GRIHASTHA (!), gave Krishna dasa *sannyasa* on behalf of Srila Prabhupada. Also, Dravinaksha dasa writes that a certain devotee named Akiladhara dasa received initiation from Srila Prabhupada through the medium of Adi Keshava (Swami) in 1978 with the knowledge of Satsvarupa Maharaja.

The GBC finally, in 1987, recognized that those devotees first initiated by Prabhupada and second initiated by "new" gurus were actually Prabhupada disciples. So what kind of second initiation is that in those cases? Are there shades of

Narada's presence during a *keertan* at the old London temple), he has not revealed himself directly to ordinary souls. As a consequence of this, and other factors, the science of Bhakti has stayed within the shores of Bharata, seemingly constrained by natural barriers and the inhospitableness of the lands beyond, since the beginning of Kali's reign. Throughout the rest of this planet, barbarism of the worst and most repugnant sort has, until recently, entirely held sway. And the *jivas* born in such climes have gradually lost all knowledge of devotion to the Godhead, Sri Krishna, lapsing at last into agnosticism, atheism, existentialism, skepticism and 'New Age' superstition.

Against this dismal backdrop the other great preacher of devotion, whom the annals of Vaishnavism must laud eternally, puts forth his radiant light, that is, His Divine Grace, Om Vishnupada 108 A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the sole Vaishnava Thakura, or Mahabhagavata Vaishnava, whose lotus feet have pressed, thusfar, upon the soil of the Western countries in Kali Yuga. That this distinction entitles him to be glorified on a par with Sri Naradaji, I would hazard, can be justified on two grounds, 1) the aforementioned history of Vaishnavism, and 2) the perception of those who have had the fortune to get his mercy. We have already discussed the history of Vaishnavism in a perfunctory fashion, the gist of which is that Narada Muni holds a unique position with respect to preaching the Lord's glories far and wide, and that Bhakti Devi has kept herself thusfar sheltered in India. Srila Prabhupada was the first Acharya, as far as we are able to ascertain, to have ventured forth from Bharata and actually benedicted the savages with devotion to Krishna. There may have been other examples of such attempts being made long ago that men have forgotten, but we know of none, except it could be that Narada has trod these far flung lands, for he has travelled, "everywhere without restriction both in the transcendental world and the three divisions of the material world." Thus the historical parallel between the two, and their historical uniqueness, is clear.

As for the other ground for supposing Srila Prabhupada to be as great as the greatest – the perception of his fortunate disciples – that we are hard-pressed to ever forget. True, we have lately been urged to believe that any student of his that has attained to an elementary level of advancement may be seen to be as good as His Divine Grace, but we are not of that disposition, and never shall be, despite our having the greatest fondness for all our spiritual brethren. No, we do not doubt that Srila Prabhupada has a particular distinction in delivering us, for we have all, pretty much, been mean-spirited Mrigaris prior to receiving his unstinted blessings. Never, since Narada traversed this world, have so many heathens been turned into Vaishnavas. And if any have likewise been converted since his passing, then that was due almost entirely to his books, the place of his perceivable residence, in his physical absence, for those yet conditioned. We have not yet perceived even one soul as great as Srila Prabhupada nor as merciful to such unworthy wretches as ourselves. It is not that other Acharyas have not been compassionate and thus intent on the elevation of all suffering beings, but it is our Prabhupada who has come to us, alone and unaided, to bestow unlimited benedictions upon us. How could we possibly see him as anything but unique, or those that follow him as less dependant upon his mercy than are we?

His divine Grace Srila Prabhupada must be seen, by all those who profess to have faith in the grace of God, as second only to Naradaji in point of the unparalleled scope of his preaching. And as far as we are concerned, and this is not a sectarian estimation, he is simply unequalled in point of the eternal good he has bestown upon unqualified souls. Of course, any attempt to measure one Acharya against another is fraught with difficulties, for it is a fact that the bona fide guru is one, and universally worshippable. But our philosophy is not merely one of *abeda*, or non-distinction, it is also one of simultaneous *beda*, or difference, that is to say of individuality, of excellence and superexcellence. Thus we fell no hesitation in adjudging Srila Prabhupada to be as great as the greatest of Vaishnavas.

Vedic Cultural Museum Tours at Gloucester

by Nityananda dasa

THE tour program at Srila Prabhupada's 1796 Gloucester mansion is progressing quite well, at a rate of about 5,000 visitors a year. In a few more months, we will have our highway sign system up, which should double the number of people coming for tours. We decided to go right ahead and boldly bill Gloucester as, "Old South and Ancient East." We have found this combination to be quite attractive and an effective draw.

The nation's newest national park, Natchez Historic Park, was established in June 1990 at Melrose Plantation in Natchez, and, in a broader sense, includes the entire historic city with over 500 homes on the National Historic Homes Register. Completion of the Natchez Trace Parkway will allow visitors to end up at the scenic Natchez bluffs, overlooking the mighty Mississippi. It is estimated that tourism in Natchez will jump from 250,000 a year to millions a year! We expect many more visitors to the Gloucester Vedic Cultural Museum as a result.

The devotee tour guides (hostesses) wear saris and narrate a comprehensive historical review of the first floor's antiques, architecture, former owners, and local anecdotes. The second floor includes the Vedic temple and the Bhaktivedanta Memorial Shrine. The Vedic culture, art and philosophy is presented in a matter-of- fact manner, in the style of a museum and an educational experience. People who would otherwise never have been exposed to the transcendental truths of *karma*, reincarnation, Deity forms and *mantra* meditation are skilfully introduced to all this within the trappings of American history.

Srila Prabhupada's quarters have the best antiques and a wide array of His Divine Grace's personal documents and effects. His Vrindavan typewriter (used 1959-1962) sits on his desk. His *prasadam* mat, washcloth, bead bags, *kurtas*, notebook and much more are displayed in a large open cabinet. The walls are covered with framed letters and documents relating to His early preaching efforts. Visitors are impressed by Srila Prabhupada's books and scholarly achievements. By appreciating the pure devotee, they are making substantial spiritual advancement and insuring themselves further such opportunities in the future. The Gloucester project is thus very rewarding, as visitors are receptive, inquisitive and pleased while being introduced to Vedic culture and Krishna consciousness. If you are near Natchez, Mississippi, please stop by for a tour!

Memories of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

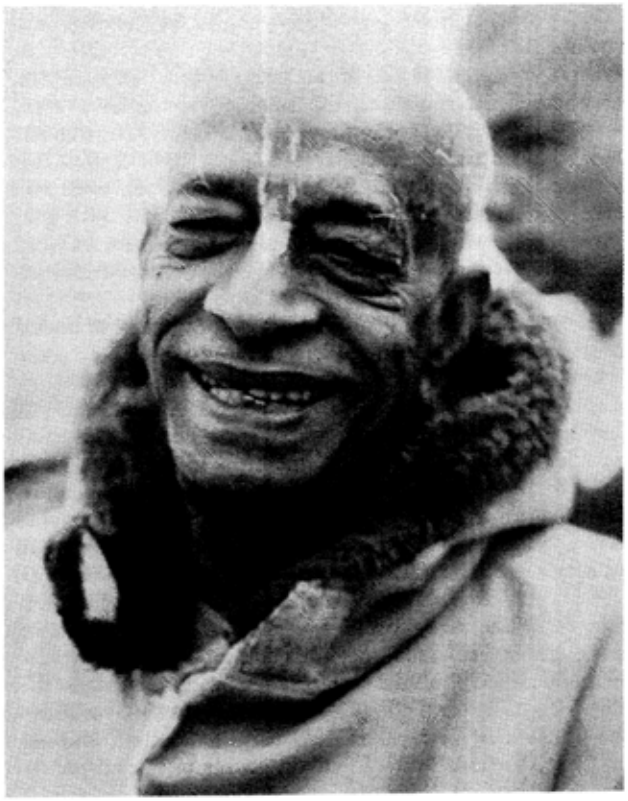
Seattle, October, 1968 — by Jahnava dasi

THE first time I met Srila Prabhupad was also the first day I came in contact with the Hare Krishna Movement. I met His Divine Grace at one of his evening lectures in Seattle, in October of 1968. Meeting him was so satisfying that I stayed the night to hear his next lecture and, in fact, never left ISKCON. Certainly my change from atheist to theist (a relief to my grandmother) and from morose to happy (a relief to my parents) took months. However, it was definitely set in motion by that first encounter. The undeniable changes in my life are a testimony to his compassion and greatness. Earlier that morning, I had flown from Houston with a ten-minute stop-over in Seattle and a Vancouver destination. During my Seattle stop-over, I delayed my flight and went into the city to look for an old friend, although I didn't know her address. I fell asleep on the bus, and then opened my eyes to see her, just outside my bus window, wearing a sari and *tilak*, and chanting with the Sankirtan Party! I joined the Party for an afternoon's chanting and dancing and then started to leave for Vancouver. My friend (Srimati dasai) convinced me to delay my flight again and stay to hear a lecture by her Swami, who just happened to be in town.

That evening, His Divine Grace arrived by car accompanied by Kartikeya dasa and Govinda dasi. They came up the front steps, and onto the porch. At the front door there were warm welcoming sounds from the devotees, who had patiently waited in the small Temple Room, to the right of the foyer. As His Divine Grace made his way from the door to his *vyasasana*, the entire roomful of devotees bowed down. I was the only exception, and stood midway between the front door and the *asana*. As he passed by, I also bowed down due to an honest desire to offer respect, though I was careful not to imitate the devotees.

In the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, 8.3.26, Srila Prabhupad writes, "We must know that there is Someone Who has created the entire cosmic manifestation, Who is eternally existing, but Who is not within the cosmic manifestation. Simply on the basis of this suggestion, one can offer respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord. This is the beginning of devotional life." Thus, although I did not understand fully the meaning of bowing down to the Supreme Lord's representative, His Divine Grace, because of the association of devotees, my spiritual life began.

As His Divine Grace was getting seated on his *vyasasana*, Kartikeya dasa was adjusting the microphone, Govinda dasi was adjusting the tape recorder and I was sent by the devotees to offer him a garland. Earlier that afternoon I had made the garland entirely of red roses and red carnations in a symmetrical pattern. I plopped the garland around his neck so that the garland fell unsymmetrically. Feeling undone, I turned to go and sit down. From behind me I heard: "Thank you very much." in a softly spoken but deep, resounding voice. Surprised, I eagerly replied, "Thank you!" I made my way to the back of



the crowded room. About twenty devotees were in Seattle at that time, including: Jayananda dasa, Gargamuni dasa, Vishnujana dasa, Tamala Krishna dasa, Revatinandana dasa, Madhudvisha dasa, Sudama dasa, Karttikeya dasa, Upendra dasa, Naranarayana dasa, Jaya Gopala dasa, Jivananda dasa, Vrindavan dasa, Bilvamangala dasa, Govinda dasi, Harsharani dasi, Srimati dasi, Madhavi Lata dasi, Dinatarini dasi. Twenty to seventy guests were attending his lectures those days.

The credible change from what was formerly a living room to Temple Room was largely due to an impressive altar that had been constructed by Naranarayana dasa. Fashinoed from panels of a golden wood, which also formed a six-foot wainscot around the room, the altar was very pleasing to see. On the lower of the altar's three shelves, three feet above the floor, were treasures from India: a large round brass incense holder, brass vases, two silver candlesticks, a conchshell, and a picture of Lord Vishnu. On the middle shelf were a black and white photo of Srila Prabhupada's face, a beautiful Indian print of Lord Chaitanya, and a simple ink drawing by Gaurasundara dasa and Govinda dasi of Sri Panchatattva. The top shelf was constructed so as to focus attention on the commanding presence of Lord Baladeva and Lord Jagannatha. (Later, Srimati Subhadra was added.) These 15-inch Deities were dressed simply in golden satin, without jewels or garlands. Between Them was a complete set of 3-inch Jagannatha Deities. Long, red satin curtains, which opened and closed on a semicircular curtain rod, hung before the altar.

All the pictures in the room were nicely framed. To the left of the altar was a beautiful Indian print of Gopala with His arm around a calf. Forming a border near the ceiling were several captivating photos taken by Gurudasa on morning walks in San Francisco of Srila Prabhupada's face. On the left wall was a

painting of Krishna driving Arjuna's chariot by Jadurani dasi. To the right of the altar was the *vyasasana* on which His Divine Grace was seated. It was an amazingly ingenious structure. Since the living room was too small to accomodate many people, a triangular *vyasasana*, elevated three feet from the floor, utilized the corner space. The back of the seat was aristocratically cushioned with a deep blue velvet, inset with large golden tacks. The seat itself was cushioned with gold velvet replete with a large, comfortable back bolster. A week later, a small gold velvet canopy was to be added above his seat, made by myself under Naranarayana's prodding.

His Divine Grace appeared most authoritative, and during his stay in Seattle he looked exactly like the formal photo taken of him with the *Bhagavatams* by Gurudasa. His physical appearance was that of an elderly gentleman. His face was still slack on ther left side due to his recent heart attack. He was speaking with difficulty and frequently stopped to cough. In fact, his soft voice was only audible due to loud amplification. At first, due to a preconceived idea that a spiritual leader would have a youthful form, displaying his mystical qualities even in his appearance, I was disappointed by his physical weakness. However, his sincere effort to openly communicate his message, despite so many obstacles, captivated me. In the coming years, although he became healthier and sometimes very youthful in appearance, I always chose to remember his gravity at this time. This is the way I still prefer to remember him – as someone whose love for Lord Sri Krishna is fathomless, and one whose instructions, when followed, enable us to become the unalloyed servants of his mission and not take him cheaply.

My first impressions of his character never wavered in the years to come, instead they have grown. The strongest impression was that he was not only humble, he was inconceivably humble! In all the people I had ever known, humility was a rare quality. In contrast, he was free from self-pride and did not advertise himself in any way. In general he spoke in such a way that he appeared insignificant and what he spoke about appeared great. He referred to the original Sanskrit texts to back up everything he said. Also, his humility was evident when he referred to his own Guru Maharaja. His manner of speaking was simple and direct. When he quoted the scriptures he seemed as confident as a lawyer who directly states the facts from the lawbooks. That was what was so amazing – he definitely wasn't manufacturing something new. He was quoting the original, ancient texts! In short, he had the conviction of a lawyer and the honest simplicity of a child.

Although I was staunchly skeptical, his lecture convinced me that he was someone I could trust, someone who would not cheat me. In general, I had been rightfully fearful of joining *yoga* groups (including the Shivananda Yoga Ashram in Vancouver that had been my destination that day!) Not wanting to jeopardize my spiritual life, I had feared being cheated by the much advertised *gurus* and pseudo-philosophical groups of the 60's, who, for all their pomp and show, gave no liveable or substantial philosophy in return for their high prices.

His Divine Grace, however, exhibited an air of renunciation – he clearly had no need to enjoy life at the expense of his disciples. Furthermore, his disciples showed every evidence of being well-cared for. They looked healthy, they were nicely-mannered and very generous, and their speech was not harsh or crude – a far cry from the hippies of the 60's. There was a definite joyfulness in their community. In return they offered Srila Prabhupada every respect and comfort possible, according to their humble means.

Before his arrival, they had spoken confidently to me about the Krishna Consciousness philosophy from their own realization. It was such a relief to find a whole community of people who had the good sense to abstain from intoxication, meat-eating, illicit sex, and gambling while they aspired for spiritual development. That was sound evidence that they must have a strong leader who was not a cheater. But I wanted to be sure that he gave the highest truth, because I didn't want to go part-way. I was studying the situation with a skeptical curiosity; still, that first lecture revealed something subtle and moving. Certainly, he was a person who was self-satisfied, because he treasured a real love for someone, and that Someone was God. In contrast, I was desiring to experience real love and I was still wondering whether or not God existed. Since Srila Prabhupada was obviously sincere in his conviction, I wanted to understand more about his love for God. After the lecture I raised my hand to ask a question; however, he did not acknowledge me. Even though my hand was visible and the only one raised, he waited until someone else raised their hand and he took their question.

As this happened three or four times I became less haughty and increasingly eager to hear what he would say. When I became a little desperate, he acknowledged me. With all the humility I could muster I submitted, "Sri Bhaktivedanta Swami...", but then I was momentarily overwhelmed by the mercy of his concentration upon me. He patiently waited and I continued, "...how is it possible that the Universal Presence, which is humanly inconceivable – at least to me, at this time – how can it have the form of Radha and Krishna?" That afternoon, devotees had told me that the Absolute Truth, which I impersonally called the "Universal Presence", was actually Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His consort Radha.

His Divine Grace answered simply, "By His mercy." He then spoke very forcefully, saying, "You cannot make the sun rise, and similarly, you cannot make God appear before you just to answer your doubts!"

I was thunderstruck by his choosing this particular example, since four months earlier I had climbed a mountain and sat there all night alone, waiting for dawn, with the intention of "making" the sun rise – though when the dawn came, it was so cloudy that I could not even see the Sun.

His Divine Grace then spoke softly, and indicating his disciples with a wave of his arm, said, "But you just associate with these nice boys and girls here, chant this Hare Krishna *mantra*, eat Krishna *prasadam*, study my books scrutinizingly, and engage yourself in a little service, and then the Lord will reveal Himself to you, from within your heart, in His own time, by His sweet Will, with all His names, fame, forms, pastimes, paraphernalia and entourage." I willingly took up his offer, and never left his ISKCON.

"Krishna's speech, which contains all the good qualities in the Universe, is described in the following statement by Uddhava, 'The words of Krishna are so attractive that they can immediately solve all the problems of the world. Although He does not speak very long, each and every word from his mouth contains volumes of meaning. These speeches of Krishna are pleasing to my heart.' " [*The Nectar of Devotion* pgs. 163-164] Since Srila Prabhupada always acted under Lord Krishna's direction, his speaking also had all the above qualities, as is exemplified by this incident. All Glories to Srila Prabhupada!

Errant Vaishnavas: Births as Beasts or Time in Hell?

by Karnamrita dasa

IT has generally been assumed that all those who take to the path of devotion to Krishna are beyond the jurisdiction of Yama and are exempt from the terrible reactions to sin that are visited upon the non-devotees. That we generally consider ourselves to be above the law of action and reaction, I would venture, is a folly that might encourage misbehaviour in immature devotees and lead to great suffering on the part of those daring to test this idea's validity. In this article I hope to bring this question into the arena of philosophical discussion by offering the suggestion that we should not complacently imagine ourselves to be immune to severe reactions to sinful deeds.

We could profitably begin our discussion by examining the example of Ajamila, whose career is detailed in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. We are all aware, no doubt, that the *Bhagavata* is replete with examples of the deeds of both the Godhead and His parts and parcels that exemplify the interaction of spirit with matter and spirit with spirit to the highest degree. These histories are not expounded for the mere sake of telling an enthralling tale, albeit a transcendental tale, but rather serve as beacons in the darkness of the material sphere that guide us in the proper understanding of Krishna, the world of Maya, and the living entities.

Vaishnavas and Immunity

In the case of Ajamila, a number of points are elucidated by the recounting of his life, viz. 1) that his early strict practice of *brahmacharya* qualified him to receive special clemency at the time of his death; 2) that the Holy Name, even if it be impurely chanted, can deliver one from the greatest calamity and purify one of all sinful reactions; 3) that even the worst sinner can swiftly attain to pure devotion if he is willing to forswear his evil ways and take exclusively to *sadhana-bhakti*; 4) that Vaishnavas have special immunity from the minions of Yamaraja. Notwithstanding the fact that Ajamila's chanting of *namabhasa* at the time of his demise did not immediately enable him to enter Vaikuntha, and that Ajamila's chanting *namabhasa* was the immediate and most significant cause of his deliverance from the clutches of the *yamadutas*, it is the fourth matter which is of interest to us at present. Since we have often found ourselves to be burdened with philosophical misconceptions it is worth considering whether an errant devotee might perchance find himself brought before Yama, and the following question thus arises: "Is the Vaishnava that is exempt from arrest by the *yamadutas any* sort of Vaishnava (Ajamila seems to have been one of the least commendable sort), or must he be a transcendental Vaishnava capable of chanting *suddha-nama*?" Here are some pertinent verses from the 6th canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam*: "[Yamaraja said:] ...intelligent men decide to solve all problems by adopting the devotional service of chanting the holy name of the Lord... Such persons are not within my jurisdiction for punishment. Generally they never commit sinful activities, but even if by mistake or because of bewilderment or illusion they sometimes commit sinful acts, they are protected from sinful reactions because they always chant the Hare Krishna *mantra*. My dear servants, please do not approach such devotees, for they have fully surrendered to the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they are equal to everyone, and their narrations are sung by demigods and the inhabitants of Siddhaloka. Please do not even go near them. They are always protected by the club of the Supreme Personality, and therefore Lord Brahma and I and even the time factor are not competent to chastise them. *Paramahamsas* are exalted persons who have no taste for material enjoyment and who drink the honey of the Lord's lotus feet. My dear servants, bring to me for punishment only persons who are adverse to the taste of that honey, who do not associate with *paramahamsas* and who are attached to family life and worldly enjoyment, which form the path to hell." [Bhag 6.3.26-28]

One might deduce from one's initial reading of these verses that, since the accidental commission of sins is mentioned with respect to those exempt from arrest by the servants of Yama, even materialistic or fallen devotees are beyond the jurisdiction of death personified and his agents. However, we should take note that constant chanting of the Hare Krishna *mantra*, and full surrender to the Personality of Godhead are referred to as prerequisites for those exempted from punishment by Yama. Exempted persons, Yama tells the *yamadutas*, have "no taste for material enjoyment" and they "drink the honey of the Lord's lotus feet ". He goes on to describe those who should be arrested, viz. those who are "adverse to that taste of honey", those who do not associate with *paramahamsas*, and those who are overly attached to wife or husband and concomitant material enjoyment.

It seems, however, that only devotees who have rid themselves of *anarthas*, at the very least, can be said to have "no taste for material enjoyment". And one who actually drinks the honey of the Lord's lotus feet must surely be at least a *raganuga-bhakta*. On the other hand, *misra-bhaktas* may not exactly be "adverse to that taste of honey", even if they are far from factual realisation of that taste, nor are they likely to be as bewildered by the allurements of worldly enjoyment as are the atheistical. Still, Yamaraja's statements must at least leave us in some doubt as to the widely held premise that all devotees, even the most bewildered and wayward, are utterly beyond his reach. We should also note the following: "...one should always be very careful to be free from all sins and never think of counteracting sinful activities by chanting the Hare Krishna *mantra*, for this is another offence. If by chance a devotee *accidentally* performs some sinful activity, the Lord will excuse him, but one should not intentionally perform sinful acts." [Bhag. 6.3.31 purport] Prabhupada's intention is clear: Krishna punishes those devotees who intentionally sin.

Be Safe, Become Pure

The abovementioned words of Yama, as immortalised in the *Bhagavatam*, are open to interpretation, and it would be unwise, perhaps, to base out conclusion regarding the possibility of impure devotees being brought before the judge of the dead on them alone. However, we find a striking phrase in one of Srila Prabhupada's purports to the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* which seems to confirm our suspicion in that regard: "Only the devotees, who are always engaged in the service of the Lord,

are exempt from the jurisdiction of Yamaraja." [Cc Madhya 6.167 purport] This statement is fairly unambiguous – though it should be remembered that it has been edited, and that its ambiguity might be less if the punctuation were different. Be that as it may, Srila Prabhupada clearly links *uninterrupted* devotional service with immunity from arrest by the *yamadutas*. It is also worth noting that, in his commentary on the section of the 5th Canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam* which deals with hellish punishment, Srila Prabhupada at no time speaks of exemption from such punishment for erring devotees. He therefore states: "Because the human being has developed consciousness, however, he cannot do anything against the principles of *varnashram-dharma* without being condemned...a human being who does not use his developed consciousness but instead acts like an animal surely undergoes punishment in different hells." [Bhag. 5.26.17 purport] Regrettably, we have often known immature devotees succumb to the dictates of their senses and behave animalistically. Srila Prabhupada has also informed us that one who cannot chant his prescribed number of rounds of *japa* is not a human being. If materialistic devotees descend to a level of sub-human activity and are unwilling to improve themselves, how can they expect to be exempt from stringent reactions to their misdeeds? It seems that Vaishnavas who slacken in their execution of devotional practices, and meanwhile fail to desist from perpetrating some heinous sin, could well find themselves in the courthouse of Mrityu, the Lord of the Plutonic region!

Bharata Born as a Deer

Despite there being indications that foolish devotees may be obliged to visit the netherworld on account of perpetrating evil acts, we do not intend to come to a firm conclusion with respect to such near-devotees and hell at this time. But one fearful punishment that devotees may have to endure, namely birth in animal bodies, is indisputably probable in the instance of one deliberately deviating from the standard behaviour expected of Vaishnavas. In that connection the life, and subsequent lives, of King Bharata, as described in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, 5th Canto, leave us in no doubt whatsoever that devotees may find themselves born as beasts as a result of committing culpable acts. We are informed of the spiritual status of Bharata Maharaja as follows: "The most exalted devotee, Maharaja Bharata...engaged constantly in the devotional service of the Lord. Naturally his love for Vasudeva, Krishna, increased more and more and melted his heart. Consequently he gradually lost all attachment for regulative duties [*vaidhi-bhakti*]. The hairs on his body stood on end, and all the ecstatic bodily symptoms were manifest. Tears flowed from his eyes, so much that he could not see anything...At this time, his heart, was filled with the water of ecstatic love..." [Bhag. 5.7.12] The Acharyas who have commented upon this verse are unanimous in their concluding that the king had attained to, and was exhibiting the symptoms of, *bhava*, the preliminary stage of *uttama-adhikara*. It is not until one is firmly established in *bhava* that one becomes entirely free of the last remaining vestiges of *anartha*. Thus Bharata became enamoured of a deer and apparently fell victim to material inebriety: "Gradually Maharaja Bharata became very affectionate toward the deer...Being attached to raising the deer, Maharaja forgot the rules and regulations for the advancement of spiritual life, and he gradually forgot to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead..." [Bhag. 5.8.8] Prabhupada comments, "Even such an exalted personality as Bharata Maharaja, who had attained loving affection for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, fell down from his position due to his affection for some animal. Subsequently...he had to accept the body of a deer in his next life." {Bhag. 5.8.12] later he states: "If we misuse our position and think that we are fully engaged in devotional service and can do whatever we like, we have to suffer like Bharata Maharaja and be condemned to accept the type of body that impairs our devotional service." [Bhag. 5.8.29 purport] Sometimes devotees think that they are sufficiently engaged in devotional activities to risk performing some abominable act. Naturally, if a devotee accidently falls down, but is sincerely repentant, and desists from perpetrating evil acts, he will be forgiven and can continue to advance in spiritual life. If, on the other hand, one deliberately and knowingly sins, thinking that he may continue thus and that he will eventually be forgiven due to his sincere chanting of the holy name, etc., he puts himself at risk of severe punishment. Srila Prabhupada accordingly warns us: "By constantly chanting and hearing the holy names and pastimes of the Supreme Lord, one certainly becomes purified...However, if one purposefully falls victim to sense gratification, he has to be punished, at least for one lifetime, like Bharata Maharaja." {Bhag. 5.8.31 purport] The import of this declaration is clear: if a Vaishnava deliberately sins he will be punished. Not only that, such a bewildered devotee will have to be born, like Bharata Maharaja, in the body of an animal, if not many times, at least once! Of course, such punishment is not inflicted merely to torment a devotee, it is intended to quickly rectify him so that he can continue to progress towards union with the Lord. Notwithstanding this fact, punishment by possibly repeated assignment to the body of some ignorant beast is a reality for devotees who willfully contravene the laws of God.

Summary

In summary, we have attempted to show that devotees must not commit serious infractions of Godly behaviour and expect to be pardoned without first repenting and desisting from such infractions. With respect to wrongful acts perpetrated against other *jivas*, one must at least seriously question the justice of Lord Krishna allowing *any* living entity to consciously cause protracted and undeserved pain to other living beings without giving him more than minimal chastisement for his wickedness. Are we to suppose that a materialistic devotee, that is, one who cannot yet act under the direct guidance of Krishna, can inflict whatever agonies he wills upon other *jivas*, and receive nothing more than mild remonstration from the Lord, especially if the butt of his waywardness is another devotee? It is true that the reactions to a devotee's past sins are minimised upon his taking to the path of devotion, but it is folly to imagine that he can indulge in whatever nastiness he wishes after that time and receive the same clemency as he did at the outset. Bharata was an exalted *bhava-bhakta* and yet he was forced to take birth as an animal for the simple reason that he allowed himself to be diverted from his devotional practices by becoming attached to a deer! We can only surmise what fearsome results might ensue for a devotee of less exalted stature who commits a far worse breach of devotional practice and fails to rectify himself. We have seen that he is almost certain to be reborn in the animal kingdom. It should also be recognised that he may have to suffer some painful correction at the hands of the *yamadutas*.

Diplomatic Immunity?

by Anonymous dasa

CHEATING is One of the Four Defects of a *Conditioned* Soul [SP. Lect. – LA 12/9/73 "Illusory Contemplations"]

"They do not accept knowledge from the authority... You are a fool, so whatever you manufacture – so-called knowledge – that is also foolish. How can we depend on your foolish knowledge?... Everyone is a fool. He cannot manufacture; he has to learn; he has to take knowledge from a person who knows. Then he's perfect. That is our system. We are taking knowledge from Krishna. We are taking knowledge from *Bhagavatam*. Therefore our knowledge is *perfect*--we are taking *authority*.

"As we are, we are defective. Our position is [such that] sometimes we [make a] mistake: Two plus two equals five. But it is not fact. So two plus two must be four. But if we make five or three, that means the whole background becomes wrong... - we are liable to do that mistake. And illusion... Illusion means: Two plus two is equal to four. I've written it as five, but I'm seeing it as alright. That is illusion... Therefore, *One Should Not Correct Himself*. Another person should take the *editorial* correction work. Because the man who has written [some text], he sees it is right. This is called illusion.

"...*Cheating means*: You have made a mistake – two plus two is equal to five. 'Yes,' you are persisting, 'Yes, it is right.' That is *cheating*. Everyone in this material world, they are born foolish, and still they are manufacturing knowledge. That is cheating... The so-called scientists, so-called philosophers, their basic principle is wrong, and they are presenting some theories, and that is being accepted by people, that is *cheating*."

SP: A scientist means one who knows his subject matter *thoroughly*. He's scientist... Unless you have got *perfect* knowledge how can you teach? That is our proposition.

Bob Cohen: Without perfect knowledge, though, you can teach what knowledge you have.

SP: No that is *cheating*. That is not teaching, that is cheating.

Bob: Without perfect knowledge, can I not teach some things?

SP: You can teach up to that, which point you *know*.

Bob: But I should not claim to teach more than I know.

SP: Yes, that is *cheating*. [*SP Conv #3*, pg. 71]

Even if Well-Intended, if You Misguide Someone, That is Cheating

[*SP Conv #3*, pgs. 35-36, London, with *Mensa Society*]:

SP: Therefore the truth is very confidential. *Dharmyasyartha... guhyam*. It is kept very confidential. Then how to have it? *Mahajano yena gatah sa panthah. You have to follow the GREAT personalities who have ACTUALLY REALIZED God. That is the conclusion*...So far as we are concerned we are receiving knowledge directly from God. Just like *Bhagavad-gita*. It is accepted, spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore if you take [your] conclusion from the speeches delivered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead that [conclusion] is fact. That is very easy authority. Just like I was explaining. You are searching after who is your father but if you simply ask your mother, "Who is my father?" The truth is immediately disclosed. Immediately.

Mensa Member: Being a lawyer, I would say that that doesn't necessarily follow.

SP: Why?

MM: Well, it's a wise woman sometimes who knows who's the father.

SP: That is your misfortune if your mother cheats you... We are expecting [that the] mother will not cheat.

MM: Some of them don't know!

SP: That is a different thing. Suppose you are a lawyer. I put my faith in you but if you cheat me I lose the case. That is another thing.

MM: Sometimes it is just honest ignorance.

SP: No. Generally mother is honest. If one is unfortunate, he has got mother like that, [then she will] cheat you. Generally [it is] expected, mother is honest. Mother loves [her] child, [she] gives the good information... That is mother's position. But if someone has got a different mother, that's... But as you say, the mother gives misinformation. Similarly, if you [as a lawyer] misguide me, that is not good. But I will have to depend on you.

MM: But not deliberately. A lot of people don't know that the information is wrong.

SP: No. Sometimes it is done deliberately. Sometimes it is done deliberately because everyone in this material world is imperfect. Therefore there is tendency of *cheating*. This is one of the qualifications of the conditioned soul. He becomes mistaken. He becomes illusioned. He *cheats* and his senses are imperfect.

MM: Well, I'm sorry, but I think you're using the word cheat in a much broader sense. We would use cheat as a conscious mistake as opposed to a person who doesn't realize that what he says doesn't happen to be true.

SP: No, no, conscious [or not]... Suppose you think it is right but it is wrong. That is also *cheating*. Without knowing the thing perfectly well, if you deliver your knowledge to somebody that's *cheating*.

MM: Well, I think that's being a bit hard when a person is not... If he's tried his best to do something and he doesn't intend to mislead, to call that cheating is a bit hard.

SP: No, even if not intend, but if you misguide some way or other without sufficient knowledge, that is also *cheating*.

MM: Well, we would say, using the English language properly, that's a misuse of the word.

SP: But generally, if I'm not in perfect knowledge, if I guide you, that is, according to Vedic culture, *cheating*. You must be perfectly confident of the knowledge. Then if you deliver the knowledge that is right. Just like our position is that we say what Krishna says. Krishna is God. So we say what Krishna says. We don't say anything which Krishna does not say. Therefore you are confident that we are delivering the right message. We don't manufacture our own philosophy or words. We simply say, "Krishna says, '*sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja*.' " Krishna, God, says that: "You simply surrender unto Me, I take charge of you." We are preaching the *same* philosophy: 'That you surrender unto God and you'll become happy because God takes charge of you.' We don't manufacture our words. That is not cheating."

Afterword

Is the Mensa member accurate when he accuses SP of being too hard on "honest misleaders" by calling them "cheaters"? What about our own GBC? Is it a proper use of the English language to call them *cheaters*, as the Mensa member (and the GBC) would deny? Or is the Mensa member (and the GBC) just trying to justify their own position ("honor among thieves")? Who's telling it like it is? What is the real truth?

Let's define our terms [*Random House College Dictionary*]:

CHEAT– n: 1) a fraud; swindle 2) *impostor*

v: 1) to defraud; swindle 2) to deceive; influence by fraud 3) *to elude; deprive of something expected* 4) to practice fraud or deceit.

Cheat implies conducting matters fraudulently, esp. for profit to oneself.

IMPOSTOR– 1) *a person who imposes fraudulently upon others.* [e.g., To claim to be something one is not. To pose as an authority when one is not.]

2) a person who practices *deception* under an *assumed* character or name. [e.g., "-pada", "-deva", etc]

Therefore, anyone who either claims to be a *maha-bhagavata,* demands the respect and worship due a *maha-bhagavata,* or even accepts such respect and worship, when he is not worthy of such is a preposterous and impertinent imposter. (e.g., like a peon who charades as the Viceroy when the Viceroy is absent). Such an unqualified imitator is an *impostor.*

FRAUD– deceit, trickery, or *a breach of confidence.*

If we assume someone to be of a certain standard, confide in him, and trust that he will deliver what was promised or indicated, but then that person is not to the standard we expected or *he is exposed to be something other then what he was made out to be* or *what he had claimed,* and he is otherwise unable to deliver what he made us to believe he would, then that is *cheating.*

In other words, in terms of ISKCON's History, the GBC & the Guru:

– To pretend to know what you don't know.

– To make a pretence of being something you are not.

– To speak as an authority on a point where one is not.

– To manipulate the truth by withholding or distorting facts, with the result that others become misled – and especially in order to protect vested (personal or extended) interests.

This is cheating. This is fraud. This is deception. The "new-gurus" were impostors. and this was – and still is – the history of our movement (gurus and GBC) since 1977.

Present-day GBC Members (1990)

Kindly respond to the above or stand as accused. We can no longer bear to hear *lies*, *cover-ups*, and *patronizing*. Let us hear the *full truth* (about our movement's history and the *guru*). We joined ISKCON for that. We got it complete from Srila Prabhupada. But we've been continually disappointed by the GBC. After misleading somebody, common decency has it that any *honest* person would apologize. We have yet to hear that. As Draupadi cried out in supplication at the "vicious assembly", "Is there even one man who will not feel shame and stand up for the cause of righteous-ness?", so I appeal to the respectable members of our GBC, "Is there not one man of integrity on this body who will speak the truth and denounce our inglorious history of deviation from Prabhupada's order? Srila Prabhupada frankly condemned his Godbrothers for creating successor *acharyas*. Yet the GBC leadership continues to flatter ours and grants them diplomatic immunity, hiding the real facts and pretending that nothing is (or was ever) wrong. However, contrary to the present GBC *modus operandi,* we are servants of the *Absolute Truth*--without compromise – not of social or ecclesiastical conventions. Let the GBC become followers of this one principle (*satyam*), and then they will be respected as proper leaders. We must always consider them as Vaishnavas in good-standing and how they have rendered (and continue to render) commendable service to Srila Prabhupada's mission. Srila Prabhupada also, despite sharp differences and bitter feelings, appreciated the preaching activities of his Godbrothers: 'Although we are not acting conjointly, everyone of us is preaching to his own capacity.' (SB 4.28.31 purport) 'Despite misunderstanding, none of them deviated from preaching KC.' (SPL to Brahmananda 11/15/67) These are liberal and conciliatory remarks. But the point to be noted here is that that Srila Prabhupada did *both*--he praised *and* criticized them."

Excerpt from Hari Sauri's Diary

October 18, 1977

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krishna. One Bengali gentleman has come from New York? [One man traveled from New York to get initiation from Srila Prabhupada]

Tamala Krishna Goswami: Yes, Srila Prabhupada. Mr. Sukamoy Roy Choudry.

SP: So I have deputed some of you to initiate?

TKG: Yes.

SP: So I think Jayapataka can do that. If you like, I have already deputed. Tell him, some deputees, that Jayapataka's name was there? So, I depute him to do this at Mayapura and he may go with him. I have stopped for the time being. Is that alright?

TKG: What Srila Prabhupada?

SP: This initiation. I have deputed my disciples, is it clear or not?

TKG: It's clear.

SP: You have got a list of names? And if by Krishna's grace I recover from this condition then I shall begin or I may not but in this condition to initiate is not good.

Comments by Nityananda dasa

This is Srila Prabhupada's last known reference to the *guru* or initiation question, made less than a month before his physical departure. Here he describes the *ritvik gurus* he appointed as deputies. The dictionary defines "deputy" as: *a person appointed to act for, or in the place of, another; one who exercises an office in another's right; an agent; a delegate; a representative.* And the definition of 'depute' is: *to appoint as a substitute or agent to act for another; to appoint or send with a special commission or authority to transact business in another's name.*

In this conversation Prabhupada clearly refers to the list of *ritviks* he had appointed earlier in July. Whether or not Prabhupada would recover, he inteneded for his disciples to act as deputies. This fits in well with the overall evidence for the *ritvik in absentia* system put forward by VVR.

Accepting the Shelter of Srila Prabhupada

by Chaitanyapriya dasa

tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya
upadekshyanti te jnanam jnananas tattva darsinah

"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth." (Bg. 4.34)

IN the purport to this oft quoted verse Srila Prabhupada elaborated on the mechanics and methods of approaching and accepting a bona fide spiritual master. He begins: "The path of spiritual realization is undoubtedly difficult". This being so, one should obviously approach the subject matter with great resourcefulness and patience. Srila Prabhupada then states that the Lord advises us to approach a bona fide spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from the Lord himself. No one can be accepted as a bona fide spiritual master without accepting this principle of disciplic succession.

In the text, Lord Krishna states that one should approach a bona fide spiritual master, and in the purport Srila Prabhupada states that Lord Krishna is the original spiritual master and a person who comes in disciplic succession directly from the Lord Himself is the bona fide spiritual master. All manufactured processes of self-realization are completely rejected. *Dharman tu sakshad bhagavat praneetam* – this path of religion and method of approaching a bona fide spiritual master is directly enunciated by the Lord Himself. Therefore, the only course of action is to continue trying to understand the perfect process the Supreme Lord has given us and by all means, without doubt, try to carefully implement it.

For the sake of understanding this Bhaktivedanta purport more clearly I will list some of the statements individually. And for the sake of practical application I will supply ample quotes from the master himself, Srila Prabhupada, and offer my own practical experience and advice.

1) One has to approach a "bona fide" spiritual master to receive transcendental knowledge.

Approaching a bona fide spiritual master obviously entails knowing what a bona fide spiritual master is. For the sake of brevity, one quote sums up the description thereof: "The conclusion is that a spiritual master who is one-hundred percent Krishna Conscious is the bona fide spiritual master". (Bg. 4.34 purport) From such a spiritual master we have to receive transcendental knowledge. We approach Srila Prabhupada initially and primarily through his books, audio tapes, letters, videos and sincere followers. "If there is no chance to serve the spiritual master directly, a devotee should serve him by remembering his instructions. There is no difference between the spiritual master's instructions and the spiritual master himself." (C.C. adi 1.35 purport) Srila Prabhupada has obviously left ample instructions and complete knowledge in indelible written form, as well as recorded, spoken-word form. We can also approach Srila Prabhupada by approaching those devotees who have humbled themselves to the absolutely authoritative position given to Srila Prabhupada by the Supremely authoritative Person, Lord Sri Krishna. Those devotees may also serve as a guiding light.

2) Such a spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant without false prestige.

To accept someone in full surrender in the age of quarrel and hypocrisy is extremely difficult, to say the least, but that is the requirement. The obedient child, out of love, accepts the parent in full surrender. The wife, out of love and trust, accepts the husband in full surrender, and the citizen, in trust, accepts the statesman in full surrender. Accordingly, any person who scrutinizingly analyzes the character and personality of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada will in full surrender accept him as their *sad-guru*, or genuine spiritual master. "The service of the spiritual master is essential." (C.C. adi 1.35 purport) One practical way to render menial Service to Srila Prabhupada directly is to serve his *murti* form in the temple. Serve him fresh water, bring him fragrant flowers, keep his paraphernalia clean, light incense for him, read to him from his books, chant for his pleasure, offer glorification to him. Do not disregard the *murti* of Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada has repeatedly confirmed that the pure devotee is present within his picture, so what to speak of his *murti*? One can acquire one's own Prabhupada *murti* and worship him in the privacy of one's home. Just as our love and practical realization of Krishna increases through authorized worship of Krishna in His *murti* form, so it is with our worship of the bona fide, authorized spiritual master. One can also render innumerable services to Prabhupada through any of the services that are offered in his temples.

3) Satisfaction of the "self-realized" spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life.

Everyone knows that the way to satisfy someone is to fulfill that person's desires. Srila Prabhupada's desires are open secrets. Srila Prabhupada said, "If you want to please me distribute my books." He also said, "If you want to know me just read my books." By reading Srila Prabhupada's books one can get a heartfelt impression of Srila Prabhupada's desires as they relate to all the different aspects of our lives, and though many of us will not be able to execute his orders immediately we can place these desires in our heart of hearts and pray for the glorious day when we will be able to perfectly please Srila Prabhupada in all respects. Srila Prabhupada meditated on the orders of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta for no less than thirty years before actually coming to the West. In the meanwhile Srila Prabhupada started *Back to Godhead* and preached and supported his spiritual master in every way possible. So we should follow in his footsteps and do all we can now and pray for the Lord's mercy to do much, much more in the future.

4) Inquiries and submission constitute the proper combination for spiritual understanding.

Athato brahma-jijnasa? What is the nature of the absolute truth? Here is an excerpt from the *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita* which illustrates this statement of Srila Prabhupada's very well. Putting a straw in his mouth and bowing down, Sanatana Goswami clasped the lotus feet of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and humbly spoke as follows. Sanatana Goswami said, "I was born in a low family and my associates are all low-class men. I myself am fallen and am the lowest of men. Indeed, I have

passed my whole life fallen in the well of sinful materialism. I don't know what is beneficial for me and what is detrimental. Nonetheless, in ordinary dealings people consider me a learned scholar, and I am also thinking of myself as such. Out of your causeless mercy, you have delivered me from the materialistic path. Now, by the same causeless mercy please tell me what my duty is. Who am I ? Why do the three-fold miseries always give me trouble? If I do not know this, how can I be benefitted? Actually I do not know how to inquire about the goal of life and the process for obtaining it. Being merciful upon me, please explain all these truths." (C.C. madhya. 20. 98-103)

This is a perfect example of perfect inquiry and perfect submission. With this mood and with these and similar questions we should approach Srila Prabhupada's *vani* form [books, tapes, letters, and videos]. There is a general consensus amongst Srila Prabhupada's disciples that 90% of them had no other opportunity to inquire from Srila Prabhupada beyond reading his books because Srila Prabhupada had to travel extensively. Some devotees corresponded with Srila Prabhupada but he emphasized the study of his books as the way to actually know and associate with him. "If you want to know me just read my books" – a famous statement by Srila Prabhupada. We still have the opportunity of reading and hearing (cassette tapes) so one can still get to know him and serve him.

5) Unless there is submission and service, inquiries from the learned spiritual master will not be effective.

To receive transcendental knowledge we must completely surrender ourselves to the real Acharya in a spirit of ardent inquiry and service. Actual rendering of service to the absolute under the guidance of the Acharya is the only vehicle by which we can assimilate transcendental knowledge. (S.S.R. p. 73-74) Submission, surrender, service and inquiry are the main ingredients in approaching Srila Prabhupada. Obviously, all these ingredients must be properly combined with a faith-filled heart. Our strong faith in Srila Prabhupada will help us overcome all the demons of doubt that plague the condition soul, who is deeply sunk in the bodily conception of life.

6) One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine spiritual understanding.

There are essential activities described by Srila Prabhupada in the *Chaitanya Charitamrita,* Madhya-lila, ch. 15, vs. 108, purport, called *purascharya*. They are: attending *arati* and classes in the *shastras*, observing the regulative principles (no meat eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling), chanting the *maha-mantra* and associating with devotees. By the sincere execution of these *purascharya* activities and the maintenance of the proper mentality of humility one can reach the ultimate goal of the human form of life, which is to receive the dust from the lotus feet of the pure unalloyed devotee of Krishna.

7) In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned.

Here is an example of an absurd inquiry: Once, one of Srila Prabhupada's disciples asked him what the relationship is between Srimati Radharani and Lord Balarama. Srila Prabhupada became angry and strongly chastised the disciple. He informed him that he was not yet out of the bodily conception of life so he could not possibly understand such a subject matter. Inquiries as to how one can increase one's enjoyment of the material energy (and thus become more deeply entangled therein) are absurd inquiries. Here is another absurd inquiry: a visitor once asked Srila Prabhupada: "You say that if you know Krishna then you know everything – is that correct?" Srila Prabhupada: "Yes." Visitor: "Then how many windows are there in the United Nations building?" Srila Prabhupada: "How many drops of water are there in a mirage?" Questions put to the spiritual master must pertain to our cultivation of transcendental knowledge, how we can assist the spiritual master's mission, how we can ultimately develop our pure love for Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Our line of inquiry from Srila Prabhupada should be relevant to our practical advancement in spiritual life and spiritual understanding. Our questions should not be ridiculous!

8) One should not only hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, by submissive and service and inquiries.

Submissive hearing, inquiry and service are the proper basis for spiritual advancement, but one must desire to have a very clear understanding and strive to clarify, sharpen and purify one's understanding on a daily basis. One potent method is to attentively listen to Srila Prabhupada's lectures on a regular daily basis. This is a most purifying, most convincing method and affords the clearest and purest understanding of Krishna Consciousness. Srila Prabhupada is a perfectly pure transparent via medium. By regularly hearing from Srila Prabhupada we become properly connected with the *guru-parampara* and with the transcendental sound as it originally emanated from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna Himself. There are approximately seven-hundred lecture tapes, including taped morning walks, conversations, interveiws, addresses and classes, over fifty *bhajana* and *keertan* tapes and many video cassettes as well. These facilities for association with Srila Prabhupada should be fully taken advantage of – utility is the principle. Since many of us don't know how to inquire about spiritual life, Srila Prabhupada answers our most important queries automatically through a systematic hearing of his tapes. This will also increase our practical realization of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's statement that the truely great Vaishnava's are living still in sound. This ocean of transcendental knowledge and devotional *siddhanta* brought to us by Srila Prabhupada can only be tasted by those who open this jar of transcendental honey and drink heartily. Listen to the pure devotee, get a clear understanding and become fixed in transcendental loving service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna.

9) A bona fide spiritual master is by nature very kind toward the disciple.

Here are some examples of the bona fide spiritual master's kindness. He accepts the disciple's sinful actions and their reations (C.C. madhya. 22.118), he guides one out of the material concept of life (Bg. 2.29 purport), gives transcendental knowledge (Bg. 13.8-12), solves all problems (Bg. 2.8 purport), gives knowledge of Krishna (Bg. 2.29 purport), gives release from the bondage of material nature (Bg. 7.14 purport), reveals one's relationship with Krishna (Bg. 5.16 purport) and ultimately he takes the disciple back home, back to Godhead.

10) When the student is submissive and always ready to render service, the reciprocation of knowledge and inquiries becomes perfect.

When a devotee is actually submissive, he is freed from the tenacious attachment to his previous misconceptions of life and

is willing to accept in full and clear consciousness the messages of Srila Prabhupada. When his desire to serve Srila Prabhupada has reached a stage of mature determination, it is at this time that the reciprocation of knowledge and inquiries become perfect. Or, in other words when a devotee softens his heart towards Srila Prabhupada and directs his service, prayers, *japa*, *mantras*, inquiries and attachment towards him, the reciprocation between the disciple and Srila Prabhupada is established and the so-called physical barriers of time and space are permanently removed by the All Understanding, Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna, Himself. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

Membership Rules for New Jaipur

Members must attend the morning program at least five days a week under normal circumstances: Mangala-arati, Tulasi-puja, Bhagavatam-class, Guru-puja. Poor attendance will not be overlooked.

Members must strictly follow the four regulative principles: No intoxication, no illicit sex, no gambling and no eating meat, fish, eggs or products thereof.

Members must chant daily 16 rounds japa on beads. It is recommended that rounds are chanted before breakfast.

Members must conduct themselves properly according to codes of Vaishnava etiquette and civil laws and codes.

All adult members must give at least three hours in service to the community project each week. Naturally, the more the better.

Members must adhere to a conservative dress code and appearance.

Members must not send their children (under 18) to any non-Vaishnava schools, but may teach them at home, in the *gurukula* or by mail correspondence course. *Karmi* schools are unacceptable.

Members must not eat at *karmi* restaurants and agree to offer to Krishna by proper method whatever they eat. *Bhoga* becomes *prasadam* only after being properly offered to Krishna.

Each resident family is expected to prepare something for community Sunday feasts or special festivals and take a share of the morning Deity worship responsibilities.

Only Krishna conscious videos are allowable and no others. Television is banned, as it is an insidious means by which the demoniac civilization contaminates the consciousness. A member found to be watching TV must surrender or disable his TV.

Members must not read *karmi* fiction, listen to *karmi* radio or *karmi* classical, jazz, rock or any kind of *karmi* music.

Those devotees who cannot comply with the above rules may participate in the New Jaipur community while residing outside the temple property, provided they are following the four regulative principles and are dedicated to serving Srila Prabhupada's teachings.

Note: The cost of living is very low in Mississippi, with houses for sale from $35,000, rental property from $250/month. The local economy is recovering and on an upswing due to oil and tourism. Those interested in employment opportunities in the New Jaipur area may write care of VVR. Housing is available in New Jaipur as well, rent averaging $250/month.

DADs & TKG

by Anonymous dasa

IN 1979, at a GBC meeting in Vrindavan, His Holiness Tamala Krishna Gosvami said, "One thing we've got to realize, is that it's not practical to preach about Srila Prabhupada the way we used to..." Then, in 1980, he exhibited a different 'mood': "I've had a certain realization a few days ago...There are obviously so many statements by Srila Prabhupada that his Guru Maharaja did not appoint any successors...Even in Prabhupada's books he says *guru* means by qualification. The inspiration came [later] because there was a questioning on my part, so Krishna spoke. Actually Prabhupada never appointed any *gurus*. He didn't appoint eleven 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*...Now I understand that what he did was very clear...he appointed officiating priests to initiate on his behalf. He appointed eleven, and he said very clearly, 'Whoever is nearest, he can initiate.' This is a very important point, because when it comes to initiating, if it isn't whoever is nearest, it's wherever your heart goes. Who [you] repose your faith on, you take initiation from him. But when it's officiating, it's whoever is nearest...And that's all that it was, and it was never any more than that. If it had been more than that, you can bet your bottom dollar that Prabhupada would have spoken for days and hours and weeks on end about how to set up this thing with the *gurus*, but he didn't because he had already said it a million times. He said, 'My Guru Maharaja did not appoint anyone. It's by qualification.' We made a great mistake...I can say definitely for myself, and for which I humbly beg forgiveness...that there was definitely some degree of trying to control...This is the conditioned nature, and it came out in the highest position of all. '*Guru*, oh wonderful! Now I'm a *guru*, and there's only eleven of us.'...You can't show me anything on tape or in writing where Prabhupada says, 'I appoint these eleven as *gurus*.' It doesn't exist because he never appointed any *gurus*. This is a myth...The day you get initiated you get the right to become a father when your father disappears, if you're qualified...It doesn't require an appointment, because there isn't one."

Reportedly, after cassettes and transcripts of the Topanga Canyon Talks were distributed to TKG's disciples, alarm bells were sounded by those on the GBC who were convinced that they *had* been appointed, and the tapes and transcripts were recalled by TKG. The confessions of Topanga Canyon were hushed up, and most devotees never even learned that they had taken place. They did of course transpire, and TKG assured Mahabuddhi and Guru Prasada Swami in 1984 and Jayantakrit dasa in February of 1985 that whatever he had said was correct. It appears that the Topanga Canyon Talks were the closest thing to full revelation that TKG had ever allowed. Why did he do it? It is well-known that at the time he was in hot water with the GBC, who had taken away his zone and placed his disciples temporarily under the care of other *gurus*. This was due to some peculiar preaching that he had indulged in to the effect that his Godbrothers should approach Srila Prabhupada through him! He was harshly punished by certain GBC men, and the Topanga Canyon Talks appear to have been a kind of revenge in the

form of revealing the "myth" of "successor acharyas" – the first phase of a plan to end the *guru* monopoly. It seems the reason for breaking up the monopoly was to let angry Godbrothers share the status of guruship before revolution brought down the entire house of cards. This understanding is inherent in TKG's statements at Topanga Canyon. This insight proved prescient, as in 1986-87 TKG was able to ride the white horse of reform, leading the charge to allow many devotees to become *gurus* and thus quiet certain excited revisionists who had *guru* ambitions. In this way, many devotees were unwittingly compromised by their participation in an unauthorized system of *guru* appointments, and reform quickly became an essentially dead issue. The original *gurus* were allowed to survive and even appear eminently reasonable, and to consolidate and ultimately increase their influence, along with the perks and power that come with many disciples. This tactic was very successful, for despite many Godbrothers being suspicious of TKG's motives, ambition to be *guru* displaced their cynicism in many cases, and TKG became a kind of overnight reform hero, despite his checkered record as a Zonal Acharya architect.

However, the sentiment amongst the eleven in 1980 against dispelling the myth of appointment was strong, partly due to attachment and partly to conviction, as TKG and others had so nicely convinced them in the first place that there had been an appointment! TKG was thereby temporarily constrained to bury the truth and speak the party line.

Thus, amazingly, four years later, after so much turmoil in the movement, after Jayatirtha and Hamsadutta had fallen down, and after many devotees had been thoroughly discouraged or driven out of the movement, we find these remarks blazing forth from TKG's 1984 book *Servant of the Servant*:

"Since the disappearance of our beloved spiritual master, we have seen...disenchanted persons come forward trying to cast doubt on the legacy left by Srila Prabhupada. When Srila Prabhupada appointed from among his senior disciples eleven persons to continue the process of initiation, and when after their spiritual master's departure those whom he selected assumed their duties by his command, the critics began to bark their discontent. Though they leveled their remarks against the successor *gurus*, in reality their criticism was aimed at Srila Prabhupada himself...Doubt in Srila Prabhupada's successors is a thin veneer covering the same malicious attempt as was made in 1970 to minimize Prabhupada's position as the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada saw this attempt as the greatest danger to his disciples and the Society which he had created, and he acted at once to curb it. In the same light, we who are his faithful followers must defend Prabhupada's successors to protect their young disciples and to preserve the unity of ISKCON...[does this argument sound familiar? Please see the *ISKCON Journal* for more insight]

"The critics may argue that appointment alone is not a guarantee that one has actually achieved this perfectional stage of life; Prabhupada might have appointed disciples for lack of anyone better, or hoping that they might one day achieve the desired realization. To such irresponsible criticism we answer a decisive 'NO!' Srila Prabhupada chose them because they merited his confidence. (*Nectar of Instruction*, Text Five) Srila Prabhupada conferred his blessings upon these disciples, seeing that they had dedicated themselves heart and soul to assisting him in the preaching mission. Thus he considered them to be *uttama-adhikari*, all highly advanced devotees worthy to be accepted as spiritual masters.

"Critics may doubt whether our ISKCON *acharyas* are actually liberated. Do they know their *rasa* with Krishna, and will they be able to instruct their disciples similarly? But such questions bring one dangerously near the precipice of spiritual calamity. Srila Prabhupada did not encourage such discussions, did not reveal his relationship with Krishna, nor give anyone a special initiation into theirs...Ultimately, however, the greatest proof of the bonafidity of Srila Prabhupada's successor *acharyas* is their new disciples..."

It appears that old philosophies are sometimes put into new bottles for distribution to the ISKCON masses. The hearkening back to 1970 referred to four *sannyasis* evolving a theory that Srila Prabhupada was actually God – *mayavada* philosophy. Prabhupada dealt strongly with them, expelling them from ISKCON and putting them to a preaching test which would measure their sincerity and loyalty. They passed and were readmitted into the society. TKG invoked 1970 as an adequate precedent for crushing envious persons who dared to suggest that the *gurus* were not appointed or were not *uttama-adhikaris*. Is it not strange that after four years of immense suffering and confusion, TKG, who had admitted the "myth" of "appointed successors", boldly preached his 1984 *Servant of the Servant* sermon. Perhaps this is the all time mystery and contradiction.

But the story is not over. Having led the charge for reform, TKG began to write books and perform austerities, taking on a more brahminical character. Still, elements of the old *acharya* philosophy, that Prabhupada is available, but only through me, surfaces in subtler ways. TKG writes in *The Final Pastimes of Srila Prabhupada*:

Assistant: "I'm afraid this drama's subject is *very* bitter."

Director: "...But the neem is medicinal, and its bitterness stimulates our appetite. Still, I would compare our drama to the *tamala* tree. Just as in Krishna's absence the *gopis* could feel His presence only by embracing the beautiful black *tamala* tree, devotees pained by separation from Prabhupada will feel his presence once again when they hear this drama."

And today, again invoking the *mantra* of the 1970 deviation, the editors of VVR will be smashed as heretics and drummed out of the society. The 1990 threat to excommunicate VVR's three editors was led and orchestrated by none other than TKG. This has been confirmed by a number of leading devotees.

I am aware that the above analysis may seem like a harsh, personal attack, and an unreasonable and offensive characterization of TKG and others. However, whatever has been revealed about these incidents to date has led inexorably to this conclusion. I admit to being very disturbed by what TKG has done to our society and the extent to which he has contributed to the spreading of the DADs virus and the minimization of Srila Prabhupada's position, but I do not have any personal animosity towards TKG. The Dreaded Acharya Disease is highly contagious, and some of the best devotees and most sincere preachers go down with it, racked with the fever of the desire for adoration, profit and distinction. The disease has become like an epidemic in our society, and it will never be dispelled unless the ambition to be *guru* is killed. It is destroying our society and minimizes Srila Prabhupada's importance and continued presence in ISKCON. He is the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death for generations of disciples to come. He is the principal *Acharya* of ISKCON for as long as it stands. He is the *guru* of the Hare Krishna Movement.

Physical Barriers— Tear Down the Walls!

edited by Nityananda dasa

THE question has been raised: "How does a devotee, not initiated by Prabhupada, who wants to take direct shelter of him know that his service (or that he himself) is being accepted by Prabhupada? Ajamila Prabhu has given one side of it in his treatise entitled, *Physical Barriers & Srila Prabhupada's Position in ISKCON for the Next Ten Thousand Years,* where he quotes from Prabhupada's letters (Oct.31, '69):

"As far as my blessing is concerned, it does not require physical presence. If you are chanting Hare Krishna there and following my instructions, reading the books,taking only Krishna-*prasadam*, etc, then **there is** *no question of your not receiving* **the blessings of Llord Chaitanya."**

Here's another side: Most of us are familiar with the story in the *Mahabharata* of the Nishada, Ekalavya ("One Thumb"), who lived in the forest and aspired to learn archery from Dronacharya. After being rejected as a prospective disciple since he was not a kshatriya but of a lower caste, Ekalavya fashioned a *murti* of his chosen preceptor and worshiped him, all apparently unbeknownst to Dronacharya. By his faith and utter sincerity that hunter became a better archer than Arjuna. What to speak of not receiving any direct training or instruction from Drona, Drona wasn't even aware of Ekalavya's determination.

Now, if such unacknowledged (*ajnata*) worship of a *guru* can prove so fruitful in a mundane way, how much more so is this true in spiritual affairs, and especially in ISKCON, where sincere spiritual aspirants were confused and misled by the ISKCON organization itself – ecclesiastical blunders and misconceptions perpetrated in the name of being Prabhupada's "successor *acharyas*".

Srila Prabhupada sacrificed both his physical well-being as well as his own personal goals (translating literatures) to spread Krishna consciousness in the West and insure its perpetuation into the future. Even if ISKCON folded, Prabhupada said, his books and instructions were sufficient to keep everything going. But we, as his so-called representatives (GBC's, *gurus* and leaders) have failed to understand (if not practically denied) this *most essential* principle of *parampara*: Prabhupada lives forever through his *vani*. "He reasons ill who tells that Vaishnavas die when thou art living still in sound." In lieu of the message of the *Acharyas*, we have propounded a subtle, "Prabhupada is dead," philosophy where the "living *gurus*" (who have been institutionally made forever "Kosher") become of overriding importance.

The word *parampara* indicates "handing down what has been given." But in order to give it, one has to first *receive* it – and not drop, fumble or damage it in the process. Otherwise Krishna can use anyone He sees fit to do His business, however and whenever He wants it done. Krishna can use anybody as He likes, but He is not dependent on anyone (except for his *most confidential* associates!). Therefore the propagation of the *parampara* is not contingent on any class or appointment (i.e.: Prabhupada's directly initiated disciples have a monopoly on Prabhupada's spiritual legacy). As Prabhupada ominously foretold, "Don't be surprised by who goes, but by who stays..." Each year successively shocks us further as we realize the stark truth in our Master's words.

All of us are expendable; but everyone needs Prabhupada. Let us never forget who we are and who Prabhupada forever will be. Once we understand this – how exalted Prabhupada is and how fallen we are – then we can begin (and continue) to act as *via media* for his mission.

Archeological Historian Writes New Jaipur

From Jack D. Elliott Jr., Jackson, Mississippi, 8.31.89, to Nityananda dasa:

First I want to thank you for the books and the copy of the *Vedic Village Review*, all of which I continue to find interesting. Enclosed you will find copies of letters to *Mississippi Magazine* and *Mississippi Educational Television* in which I suggest their doing features on New Jaipur. I think that such features would help to edify Mississippians regarding Krishna Consciousness and bring you more tourists. If they do not follow up, I might try my hand at feature writing. Anyway, I would sometimes like to spend more time talking to the members of your community concerning their historical research and their translating and then possibly learn some off the rudiments of Sanskrit.

If the Mississippi Department of Archives and History can be of assistance to you in your historic preservation efforts, please feel free to call on me.

Jack Elliott, Mississippi Dept Archives & History, 8.31.89, to: Jody Jaeger, Director Mississippi Educational Television

Dear Jody, If I may be so bold, I would like to suggest a subject that I think will make an interesting feature for your television series *Mississippi Roads*. Between Natchez and Fayette, is a community of people commonly referred to as "Hare Krishnas." Although many Westerners in general and Mississippians in specific regard this religion as being a modern "cult", it is in fact one of the ancient religions of India with roots going back millennia into the past. This particular branch of the Indian religious tradition follows a mystic named Chaitanya (AD 1486-1533) who was a native of West Bengal, India, where the sect is particularly prominent today.

The community in Jefferson County is known as New Jaipur after an Indian city. It is also known as the Old South Vedic Society, an apt name in that it represents a juxtaposition of ancient Indian (ie. Vedic) culture from an Old South setting. The Old South setting is provided by two antebellum mansions – the Cedars and Lagonia – that are owned and occupied by the community. The Cedars was previously owned by the movie star George Hamilton. The community also owns a third mansion in Natchez – Gloucester – the former home of Mississippi's first territorial governor Winthrop Sargent. In this antebellum setting, one finds displayed Indian art both modern and ancient, creating a contrasting, but aesthetically stimulat-

guru". He got a lot of attention for that, and also for a statement which summarized a discussion about initiations: "The *guru's* qualification is that he knows more about Krishna than his disciple." Then Bhaktiswarupa Damodara Swami, as he re-initiated Hansadutta's disciples, declared that he was not acting as a *ritvik* for Srila Prabhupada, but that he was actually the *guru* himself. Oh well, so much for our hopes that he was sympathetic to the *ritvik* viewpoint.

ISKCON Journal #1 claimed to have interviewed Upendra Prabhu in support of an anti-VVR stance, but word reaches us that Upendra Prabhu denies having any contact with IJ or having given any interview. Pradumnya Prabhu likewise denied being interviewed. Both were quite upset about IJ's tactic of misrepresenting them. Upendra Prabhu affirmed that he knows Gauridasa Pandita Prabhu, as they lived together for two months in Vrindavan while serving Srila Prabhupada. All this throws considerable doubt on the validity of *ISKCON Journal's* other interviews, such as Narayana Maharaja's.

Yasodanandana Prabhu relates this exchange between Srila Prabhupada and Tamala Krishna Goswami and Bhavananda in Vrindavan, 1977:

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guru". He got a lot of attention for that, and also for a statement which summarized a discussion about initiations: "The *guru's* qualification is that he knows more about Krishna than his disciple." Then Bhaktiswarupa Damodara Swami, as he re-initiated Hansadutta's disciples, declared that he was not acting as a *ritvik* for Srila Prabhupada, but that he was actually the *guru* himself. Oh well, so much for our hopes that he was sympathetic to the *ritvik* viewpoint.

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Srila Prabhupada fondly reminisced how it was Srila Chakravarti Thakura's commentary on *Bhagavad-Gita* (2.41) that helped him to more fully appreciate the essence of discipleship. Similarly, it is by the previous *Acharya's* commentaries that our misconceptions about *guru* will also be displaced.

From Europe, one devotee wrote that Anonymous Swami commented upon returning from India June 1989: "Nobody accepts the GBC reinitiation paper except the GBC members themselves."

In an interesting purport to CC Adi 17.141 Prabhupada states: "...people all over the world may join together in the Krishna consciousness movement and protest against the present degraded governments... The only remedy for such conditions is to enhance the *sankirtana* movement under the banner of Krishna consciousness and protest against the sinful activities of all the world's governments. The Krishna consciousness movement is...for the reformation of all the anomalies of human society...There is an immediate need for good government – a government by the people, with Krishna consciousness." Protest, reform, good government. But first we must solve ISKCON's internal conflicts and anomalies.

One devotee wrote to Sivarama Maharaja after a rather heated encounter in a recent class: "It is extremely disconcerting to see the conspicuous lack of sensitivity in the members of the GBC concerning the realities within devotees' hearts and lives. The GBC doesn't seem to think like most other devotees do. Studies on politicians have similarly shown that the ruling class doesn't see life the way everyone else does. Isn't this a bit ironic? 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' It appears to be a universal principle of bureaucracy, doesn't it? Mahadyuti Prabhu cited a quote from Prabhupada from his little quote book where Prabhupada stated there are TWO final snares of *Maya* – 1) the desire to become God, and 2) to become *Guru*. Watch out Maharaja! Please be careful."

Vegavan narrated an edifying anecdote. This incident took place in Australia 1970-71. Madhudvisha was in charge as GBC and once, Vegavan, being a natural scholar, was reading from *The Bhagavat*, by Bhaktivinoda Thakura, in class. So Mahudvisha reported this to Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada called Vegavan in his room and asked Vegavan to read the passages he had discussed in class. So Vegavan read them. And Prabhupada responded, "Very nice!" Vegavan Prabhu told an interesting story of one devotee whom he (as Temple President in Sweden) had recommended in 1977 for initiation. The letter came with his name from Prabhupada. But before Vegavan could hold a fire ceremony, the devotee left the temple because of an unstable family situation (his wife had never joined, so he moved out of the temple to straighten out their relationship). Some months later, he came back to the temple with his wife. Prabhupada had since passed away, so he sat in on a fire sacrifice held by Harikesa Maharaja. But when it came time to get his name, HKM had given him a different name than had Prabhupada! Initially, the devotee went along with the "snow-job" and was attending HKS *gurupujas*, which commenced immediately. But after some time, he demanded to be recognized as Prabhupada's disciple. He was labeled an offender, ostracized and subsequently left the movement.

As opposed to the above, one mataji now in Belgium, Lokamangala dasi, who had been in the movement only FOUR months, was initiated (fire *yajna*) as Prabhupada's disciple at New Mayapur *just TWO days* before Prabhupada's disappearance. What a close call from disastrous heartache! It's tragic that such a policy wasn't implemented all over the movement. When it was clear that Prabhupada was about to pass away there should have been a last-minute, world-wide, clarion call to initiate anyone (via the *ritviks*) who displayed any serious desire to be Prabhupada's disciple. Liberality and compassion is what characterized Prabhupada's mood. In Italy, no devotees were initiated by Prabhupada in all of 1977: they were being saved up for the new *guru*!

If we read about the previous *Acharyas* and how they would so intensely aspire to receive initiation from a great soul – or severely lament missing such an opportunity (e.g. Narottama dasa Thakura, Srinivasa Acharya, Ramanujacharya etc.) – we can get an idea of the consequences of such matters. But, unfortunately, in ISKCON our leaders all wanted to become *guru* themselves. That was shown by how easily they jumped up to be *maha-bhagavatas* instead of merely acting as humble *"ritvik" gurus* – which was the most Prabhupada ever authorized them to be, as well as being the limit of their qualification anyway. We should have continued with the *ritvik* system as was already smoothly operating in Srila Prabhupada's physical presence. As soon as these men impertinently usurped the title and position of *guru*, chaos broke out.

Ideally, there should have been no problem after Prabhupada's physical departure. As faithful followers, we should have just led them to Prabhupada with no hesitation or interference. Of course, everyone was a little naive at the time: we thought that everything would continue very fine and dandy. But most of us couldn't envision the inisidious treachery that would ensue in terms of covering Prabhupada's position and proper understanding of the philosophy.

In 1987, the GBC admitted (finally, after ten years of 2nd-class citizenship) that 1st-initiated Prabhupada disciples are Prabhupada's a disciples. (That was profound!) We want to hear it straight from those responsible for this misrepresentation – that Prabhupada can be the sole *guru* in these devotees' hearts. In other words, it's a definite "We made a mistake."

Quite frankly, if these men had ever just publicly come out and offered their sincere regrets and apologies in 1987, then all this harangue would be unnecessary today. Devotees' minds would be convinced that our GBC is a body of impeccably honest men. The way things have been, however, it's extremely hard to avoid categorizing the GBC as politicians. To confirm our mistrust, the GBC simply pats itself on the back in self-complacency for having thwarted the dangers and problems of the past. But, except for expelling Kirtanananda (which was inescapable), what have they done?

The GBC insists that disciples (*their* disciples particularly) have to accept the spiritual master "as good as God" – i.e., as a perfect pure devotee. When some of the older Bhagavan disciples heard about a GBC member's abrupt change of position on the *guru* issue, they became quite enraged, "How can they claim to be perfect when their philosophy changes every six months? And we are supposed to 'go through' these devotees or otherwise we're 'disconnected'? It's ridiculous!"

Discussion on *guru-tattva* was a prominent topic at a European seminar, where Giriraja Maharaja was asked by a 12-year Bhagavan initiate whether devotees could directly accept Prabhupada as their spiritual master without having a spiritual master or being re initiated. Giriraja gave this explanation of the Ekalavya story: "Dronacharya rejected Ekalavya as his

disciple, even though Ekalavya was faithfully worshiping him. You may make some advancement as Ekalavya became powerful in archery for some time. But ultimately, like him, you will lose all your assets unless you accept another bona fide *guru*. The example of Ekalavya shows that you will not be accepted by Prabhupada either."

The devotees present were indignant, but no one felt they could speak out. The GBC uses their superior position to intimidate, control and indoctrinate others: e.g. the next evening when Giriraja was supposed to give a class "Nectar from Prabhupada", he instead exclusively denounced the *ritvik* system.

Vishnumurti Prabhu later went up to Giriraja privately and challenged him, "Do you know what you are saying to a 12-year devotee – who is president of the Antwerp preaching center, who has done so much service for Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON, preaching and distributing his books – is that Prabhupada is going to come back and cut off his *japa* thumb and tell him, 'I reject you and I do not accept your service' ?" Giriraja Maharaja was put in a corner.

The next evening in *ishtagoshthi*, Giriraja modified his position by saying, "Their service may be accepted by Prabhupada, but not their philosophy [ie, that they can be Prabhupada's direct followers or that he is their main *guru*]. Just like a devotee may go out on *sankirtan* and accept the service of the *karmis*, but he doesn't accept their philosophy." Someone spoke up: "By that same logic, *Maharaja*, I could challenge you, 'After deviating from Prabhupada's instructions and imbibing bogus ideas on *guru-tattva* from Srila Prabhupada's Godbrothers, what makes you think Prabhupada accepts the GBC's philosophy?" He couldn't answer. Anyone can make a mistake in his philosophy. Most of us do from time to time. But when *sannyasis*, *gurus* and GBC, insist that they are right in such an authoritarian way ('We are GBC', 'I am absolute *guru*'), it is very sad.

A comment from Bhakticharu Maharaja in Italy recently, heard by VVR anonymous sources and written down verbatim: "Those who find fault with the GBC *guru-asraya* paper are simply envious. Personally, it is difficult to take re-initiated disciples because of lack of faith. I only have two."

Hridaya Chaitanya Prabhu, a 10-year Bhagavan initiate, is the president of Radhadesh and an extremely humble (i.e. submissive to the authorities) and simple devotee. After reading VVR #11 he was "a changed man." For the first time in his life he now feels like a direct follower/disciple of Srila Prabhupada. He was in ecstasy! Although he is always regulated, he stayed up until 2 a.m. reading VVR! (He never does such things). He later asked Bhakticharu Maharaja about VVR, who said better not to read it. "These devotees are not friendly to ISKCON [envious]. Better to have the enemy within than an enemy without." [Where does BCM get that from? The quote is backwards (like their philosophy)]. Anyway, all the devotees there eagerly read VVR, making copies and studying it. It's caused something of a revolution. Ironic that VVR arrived at the same time the Eastern European Block was opening up. This glastnost must be in the stars.

In one of Sivarama Maharaja's *Bhagavatam* classes, someone called his (and ISKCON's status quo) stereotyped presentation of *guru* into question. Finally he countered: "Well, this is how we work in ISKCON. If you think it's wrong, then give the example yourself, go out, start your own center, and show – not just talk philosophy-how many disciples you can make, how many books you can distribute, and how many temples you can open." A good stomper-a patent Bhagavan response and a brisk personal challenge for the questioner – but bad philosophy (in other words, "Our philosophy is 'might makes right'.") Bhakticharu Maharaja was there also and further elaborated: "There's an authority in ISKCON. If you think that the leaders are unqualified, then why don't you leave ISKCON and start your own movement? Why are you disturbing everyone's faith in their *guru* and leaders? That's violence." What about their intimidation?

While in Zurich, just after the Marathon Festival (Jan 3, 1990), Bhakticharu Maharaja was all praise for Harikesa Maharaja. Of course, Harikesa Swami deserves due credit for organizing his zone for the biggest book distribution Marathon in history. Granted. But there is a limit. After *Bhagavatam* class, from the *Vyasasana*, Bhakticharu Maharaja continued: "So when Prabhupada left the planet, there was certainly some difficulty. When the *Acharya* leaves, chaos strikes. But now that danger has been thwarted. Srila Prabhupada said that Harikesa Swami was the favorite grandson of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. So now, we see that this leaves no room to doubt that Srila Harikesa Swami IS Srila Prabhupada's SUCCESSOR. We should therefore all surrender to Srila Harikesa Swami's lotus feet and follow his every instruction *hook, line and sinker. we should all just line up with Srila Harikesa Swami*."

One might surmize that Bhakticharu Maharaja was just exhibiting some Vaishnava appreciation for a devotee who has rendered wonderful service to Prabhupada. That could be admitted, had we not gone through 10 years of Dark Ages with an identical kind of hyperbole. It resembles the situation in Bhagavan's empire (his zone was also the World Champion in book distribution for eight consecutive years), Ramesvara's, and all the others. One can imagine the response from all HKS disciples and devotees present – it was overwhelming. Afterwards, some said, "I always felt that Srila Harikesa is Prabhupada's successor, but I didn't want to offend anyone. Now Bhakticharu Maharaja has confirmed it." If this leaves you squirming, maybe it's a natural reaction from a previous traumatic experience, DEJA VU! I've seen this before! But many Godbrothers in HKS's zone who live and work with him don't quite share the same enthusiasm as Bhakticharu Maharaja.

A friend of Ajamila Prabhu's wrote to VVR; "Ajamila strongly disagrees with your idea of a *ritvik* system. To some extent, he misunderstands your position. The real problem, however, is that Ajamila is playing right into the hands of the GBC. He is presently writing a paper to rebut your *ritvik* proposition – an analysis which takes your position to the extreme (*argumentum ad infinitum*), with 'Straw Man' arguments, etc. ...he is also proposing the formation of a GBC Guru Standards Committee which would include VVR editors. It's basically a good idea, but with our present GBC, it's hardly more than a Paper Tiger. Until the GBC is reformed, they won't listen to anybody except their own members. It is the wrong time for Ajamila to attack his own side, but he is adamant to speak the 'truth' under all circumstances. Ultimately truth will prevail. But not as long as the present *status quo* continues. By his providing fuel for the GBC, Ajamila isn't helping to resolve the situation, rather he is complicating it."

The petitions in VVR # 11 and 12 went very far in their projection of the effects of the *ritvik* proposition. How will the GBC ever go for it? They have everything to lose – money, power, prestige, position and nothing to gain except pure

Krishna consciousness. With such high stakes, they're going to fight VVR with everything they have. Anyone who is a *guru* has considerable face to lose over this. It's the ultimate in humiliation – for someone to renounce his guruship and admit he's been a bogus *guru*. That's pretty heavy. Things are definitely going to polarize more before the GBC and *gurus* are reformed.

Bhakticharu Maharaja recently made this comment to Sivarama Swami in UK before leaving for India, "Actually, I haven't as yet received one paper refuting the GBC's Guru-asraya paper." If that isn't being out of touch with the general mass of devotees – I don't know what is. VVR, Srila and Gaura Keshava Prabhus wrote a few papers, but maybe they don't count.

We see that *ISKCON World Review* carries ads for Ram, Inc's Reincarnation posters, for the Gaudiya Vaishnava Press, for tofu kits, swiss skin care and therapeutic massage. However, ads for New Jaipur Press' *Vaishnava Acharya* biographies and other books are not accepted by IWR. The GBC decided in 1989 not to take our ads because we were "not in ISKCON". IWR will even do reviews of Satyaraja Prabhus books. Why should they not take New Jaipur Press's money to advertise *Ray of Vishnu*, *Seventh Goswami*, *Babaji Maharaja*, *Srimad Ramayana* and our other titles being made available to devotees in or out of ISKCON? This policy amounts to harassment only. Mukunda Maharaja, IWR editor, apologized; he gets his orders from the GBC and must comply.

Mahavishnu Swami recalls Prabhupada at one time recommending devotees to investigate the structure and principles of the Roman Catholic Church as far as its applicability in ISKCON. As we know, the Christian system is that of confirmation (viz. initiating) of everyone's direct relationship with Jesus Christ, and in that capacity the priest may serve only an ecclesiastic function (viz. *pancharatrik*). If Prabhupada actually suggested something like this, and it can be substantiated, it would be vital evidence for a *ritvik* system. Any contributors?

Question: How did the "Appointment Tapes" get so designated? There was never any appointment. This title is the biggest misnomer of ISKCON history. Tamal Krishna Goswami spoke with Hansadutta on Dec. 1, 1980, saying: "Prabhupada didn't appoint eleven *gurus*. He appointed eleven rittic (sic.) *acharyas*... We have to see Rameswara. It's part of our process to reveal our minds. Everything is based on *sastra*. Does that mean that there is no chance for discussion? We can't even discuss anymore?" Hmmm. VVR wants to discuss, and TKG agrees discussion is good (at least he did in 1980), so why has the GBC prohibited further discussions?

I hope I have not offended anyone with the above; my apologies are extended to those that I may have.

On The Guru Question

by Nalinikanta dasa

I read the arguments about *guru* in VVR #10 with some disdain. Your views had much appeal. But I don't understand why there is any argument at all. Ramesvara offered to let me hear the "appointment tapes" after Srila Prabhupada left his body, and there it was clearly stated that the new initiating gurus were to be *ritvik* initiators on Srila Prabhupada's behalf. Tamala; "Is this called *ritvik*?" Srila Prabhupada; "Yes." How can this be understood other than that the disciples of Srila Prabhupada become initiating gurus on Prabhupada's behalf? It is clear from *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita* that anyone who knows the science of Krishna can become a *guru*, and *should* become a guru, to spread love of Godhead. I personally heard Srila Prabhupada say that "One does not have to be a pure devotee to be a *guru* – just like Lord Brahma." This does not mean, however, that such teachers or gurus become as good as the selfrealized acarya and claim to be able to personally direct their students in the rasas of the spiritual sky. Rather, such *gurus* are worshipable aides for long as they repeat exactly what they have heard from the bona fide Acarya. By doing so, such brahmanas may become completely purified by the mercy of the *parampara*.

In a matter of hours Prabhupada departed, however, there was a concoction of non-scriptural philosophy that Prabhupada had now manifest in all new pure devotees who were all Acaryas, and then there were *Vyasasanas* in the temple rooms, the ex-communication of dissenters from "ISKCON," acceptance of names like "Vishnupada," and everything went downhill from there. Eventually it got so bad that so-called *sannyasis* abandoned Krishna consciousness and abandoned hundreds of disciples, many of whom have doubts or mistrust in Srila Prabhupada's remaining representatives (any disciple who is truly following is a true representative of Srila Prabhupada; that I also heard him personally say).

My feeling is that we, and particularly the GBC, are quite to blame for not only letting the tyranny go on for ten years, but also for rushing such neophyte or abused devotees into "re-initiation," which may be a bona fide rite but which is not the prerequisite for being connected to Srila Prabhupada and the *parampara*. Such re-initiation should be carefully considered in the light of historical events. Acting *gurus* should be careful to understand that Srila Prabhupada is the present Acarya, although not physically present. An Acarya is the bona fide guru, because of his perfect, 100% state of Krishna consciousness. If we were less than that in our spiritual evolution, we can be *gurus* of some sort, but if we claim to be equal to Prabhupada, we are not a *guru* but a cheater.

Comment by Karnamrita dasa:

The statement ascribed to Srila Prabhupada above, to the affect that one need not be a pure devotee to be a *guru*, "...just like Lord Brahma", needs some qualification. To begin with, anyone who gives any kind of instruction in spiritual matters is a *guru* in the common sense – he is not, however, equivalent to the 'Shri Guru' mentioned by Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, or to the 'bona fide *guru*' described in Srila Prabhupada's teachings, who must be *srotriya-brahma-nishtham*. Such a *guru* is the actual *guru* of a living being, and all other instructors with whom he has contact are considered to be manifestations of the actual *guru*. Such a *guru* must be a resident of Goloka Vrindavana (*nikunja-yuno rati-keli siddhyai*...). As for the reference to Brahmaji, we have heard that when Srila Prabhupada was informed that Nitai dasa had said that Brahma was not a pure devotee that Srila Prabhupada became furious. He condemned Nitai roundly and confirmed that Brahma was indeed pure. One only need recall Brahma's offering prayers

to boy Krishna after the stealing of the calves and cowherd boys, and specifically to the description of his exhibiting ecstatic symptoms, to understand that he was, by that time, an *uttama-adhikari* Vaishnava. That he may, previous to this, have been merely a *great* devotee, and not a *pure* devotee is accepted, however, and was confirmed by Srila Prabhupada. Be that as it may, we should take care not to harbour offensive ideas with respect to the present spiritual position of Lord Brahma.

The Next Step in the Expansion of ISKCON

Ending the Fratricidal War – A Preliminary Proposal

THE root of all the problems now facing ISKCON is that we, the disciples of Srila Prabhupada, have not yet established proper Vaishnava relationships among ourselves. While Prabhupada was here with us, we did not enjoy such relationships, and our spiritual master clearly told us that our greatest fault was our tendency to quarrel with each other. But as long as Prabhupada was among us, our contentiousness did not constitute an insurmountable problem. Prabhupada was always available to pour oil on troubled waters, keep ISKCON unified, and maintain our faith and enthusiasm.

Since the departure of Srila Prabhupada, however, our failure to establish pure relationships has become life-threatening to ISKCON. When Prabhupada left, we established *gurus* and ushered in a new complexity of relations: between *gurus* and their Godbrothers, between *gurus* and their disciples, between disciples and the Godbrothers of *gurus* – and yet we failed to fulfill the essential requirement for the continuation of ISKCON after Prabhupada's departure. We did not form ourselves into a community in which Vaishnava relations became the established standard. As a result, the new positions and relationships have only fueled the quarrels and widened the divisions, and the whole society is headed toward dissolution.

On one occasion, when our fighting came to a crisis, Srila Prabhupada spoke of "fratricidal war". But both before and after that crisis, fratricidal war has been the endemic condition of ISKCON, and this perpetual internecine strife keeps precipitating crisis after crisis after crisis.

A society of devotees in which proper Vaishnava relations are not yet the norm is called a *kanishtha-adhikari* society. Its distinguishing characteristic is contentiousness arising from envy. Envy is a product of false ego. Because of their false ego, the members are unable to establish spiritual friendship among themselves. Instead, they vie with each other for prestige, power and prerequisites. Intensely desiring the honor and respect of others, the contentious neophyte pretends to be more advanced then he actually is. He tries to conceal his shortcomings and falldowns, and in so doing, he develops a secretive mentality and holds himself back from entering into open and honest relations with his Godbrothers. Because he cannot reveal his mind in confidence, he remains aloof from real fellowship.

He strays from the path of devotional service, but his peers do not help him. For he thinks that if he allows someone to preach to him, he implicitly admits his own subordination. Therefore, he cuts himself off from hearing and becomes impervious to instruction or good advice. Because he has many secret misgivings about himself, he becomes eager to find the faults of others; that way he reassures himself of his own superiority, in spite of his many unacknowledged weaknesses.

Spiritual immaturity often leads a *kanishtha-adhikari* to indentify spiritual advancement with organizational advancement. He thinks that attaining prestige, power and the prerequisites of office is evidence of spiritual advancement. Lacking the assets for real spiritual achievement, he substitutes organizational elevation, which he can attain through his cunning or political prowess. He therefore competes intensely with others for high office, and he comes to believe implicitly that one achieves a spiritually elevated state only by becoming victorious over others. In this way material competition becomes institutionalized in *kanishtha-adhikari* societies.

Fortunately, however, the *kanishtha* stage is followed by the *madhyama* stage. A *kanishtha-adhikari* advances to the *madhyama* platform by means of *sadhana-bhakti. Sadhana-bhakti*, pursued diligently and attentively, destroys false ego, and as long as the neophyte devotees attend to their *sadhana*, they can be sure of elevation to the higher stages. There is, however, no other assured means of advancement, and habitual negligence of one's *sadhana* is therefore fatal to progressive spiritual life. Furthermore, when a neophyte devotee has risen to the *madhyama* platform, *sadhana* is absolutely necessary to maintain him in that position. If he becomes slack in *sadhana*, he rapidly reverts to the neophyte condition. Therefore, the essential prerequisite for both creating and sustaining a *madhyama* society is intense common commitment to *sadhana*.

The tragedy of ISKCON at the present time is that while the society contains many advanced devotees of the stature of *madhyama* and even *uttama-adhikaris*, the society as a whole is still operating on the *kanishtha* platform. Even though many of the most advanced devotees occupy the highest spiritual and managerial posts in ISKCON, their full spiritual potency remains unmanifest, their pure desires thwarted, and their best spiritual intentions baffled. Although they know and intend better, they repeatedly find themselves, to their dismay, involved in highly immature patterns of relationships with others. This happens indeed on all managerial levels of ISKCON.

In short, we are better than we are. This anomalous situation can only be attributed to an inheritance from the past. Many of the dominant forms of political and social interaction (*de facto*, not necessarily *de jure*) were established and consolidated years ago. Typically, these habits have tended to perpetuate themselves long after they have served their purpose, and now they impede rather than advance the best interests of ISKCON. We are wearing clothes we have long outgrown.

Some may be taken aback by the depiction of ISKCON as a *kanishthaadhikari* society. We know that ISKCON is and has always been a preaching movement, and a preaching society is *ipso facto* a *madhyama* society. However, it may be that we have on these grounds too conveniently concluded that we are *madhyama-adhikaris* and have taken it for granted that we have attained without much effort an advanced state of Krishna consciousness. What seems more likely is that the enormous spiritual potency of a single, extraordinarily empowered *ut-*

tama-adhikhari – Srila Prabhupada – was sufficient to make a society of *kanishtha-adhikaris* function somewhat on the *madhyama* platform. Therefore, we did have some success in preaching. And some failure. We should now be mature enough to take some profitable instruction from our failure.

Our effort at book distribution was simultaneously ISKCON's greatest success and greatest failure. It was a success because so many books were distributed, but it was a failure because they were distributed in an immature manner that offended the public and inevitably caused the collapse of distribution. Although books are still going out today, the sublime synthesis of preaching and collecting taught by Prabhupada is now thought to be unobtainable. The spiritual cost to ISKCON's junior members who cannot directly preach but must engage in what they refer to among themselves as *ugra-karma*, is devestating. Yet we can offer them no alternative.

Prabhupada clearly told us how we should distribute books – by preaching purely about the contents, by being utterly truthful, by giving no offense. In this, he outlined the natural preaching ways of a *madhyama-adhikari*. But because at most only a handful of our book distributors could function on that platform, we distributed books by crafty, artificial, mundane techniques. We were not personally on that *madhyama* level. Nevertheless, it was a glorious achievement that so many books went out. But because we are still immature, we are now baffled and stymied and trying in vain to discover the way to preach and distribute books, as we say, "purely".

We can do so if we actually come effectively to the *madhyama* stage. To revitalize our preaching relation to the public, we must first rectify our personal relationships among ourselves.

A devotee on the *madhyama* platform worships God with a determined vow, and by that *sadhana*, he gradually destroys his false ego. Because his false ego becomes destroyed, he can enter into genuine spiritual fellowship with the other devotees. Because he becomes fixed and fully satisfied in spiritual life. The community thus formed becomes the basis for *sankirtana*, or the congregational glorification of the Lord. In that congregation, the devotees become so joyful that they naturally attract others to join, and when the enlivened devotees see all those innocent people dragging themselves through dead lives outside the ecstatic devotional association, they feel great compassion and preach to them out of the spontaneous fullness of their hearts. Thus the community of devotees endlessly expands. Indeed, no force on earth can check it.

Many people fear that the turmoils in ISKCON are its death throes. In a sense, they are. One way or another the "old ISKCON", the ISKCON of fratricidal strife, is doomed. But if we take the proper measures, the death throes of the old ISKCON will prove to be the birth pangs of a new ISKCON, the glorious, self-effulgent, dynamically increasing preaching movement it was created to be. If, working together, we each take a small, sincere effort, we will see a dazzling explosion of spiritual energy. The banked fires of ISKCON will ignite; the glowing coals will flare into white hot heat, and all those myriads of slowly dying cinders will be fired into flames.

The rebirth of ISKCON cannot be accomplished by legalistic means or political maneuvers. If the proponents of reform become tricked or lured into taking an adversarial, antagonistic stance against GBC or *gurus*, we will simply add one more battle to the history of fratricidal war. To avoid this requires intelligence, tact and self-restraint. The danger arises not only from our own residual immaturity, but also from administrators in ISKCON trapped in habitual roles. It is understandable that those who have been forced to function and manage under the conditions of fratricidal strife, who have been beguiled into playing for so long the power game of ISKCON, will understandably see us in those political terms, and they will naturally treat us at first as an opposing party to be defeated. Until this misperception can be corrected, we must guard against being lured into playing the role of the enemy. That in itself would constitute our downfall, and after that it will not matter who "wins" because the war will continue in any case. We must rather bring each other to a higher stage of relationships through personal spiritual renewal. This is the precondition for any other truly regenerative institutional reforms in ISKCON.

One special advantage to this revolutionary project for the regeneration of ISKCON is that it need not wait on the action of GBC. It can be initiated in each temple immediately. It can be started by one devotee, and then spread to two, three, and on and on. Thus, there can be many centers of reformation, and they will each widen until all of ISKCON is included.

Any devotee who wants to institute reform must begin with himself. The prerequisites for coming to the *madhyama* stage is to be a strict follower of the regulative principles of devotional service. Spiritual fellowship cannot flourish if *anarthas* are not being relentlessly uprooted by daily practice. Therefore, every devotee who wants to help in the reformation of ISKCON must first carefully review his own spiritual condition and his personal devotional practice. If he is careless in observing regulative principles and is slack in his *sadhana*, he must immediately take up the process of rectification. This entails attending the complete morning program in all alertness, with especial concentration on attentive, offense-avoiding *japa*. By this effort, a devotee may quickly remove all his accomodations to sense gratification and undertake the deliberate dismantling of his false ego. A devotee of the reforming party should recognize sense gratification and false ego as the two great impediments to Vaishnava fellowship. They are the mortal enemies of ISKCON, and he should resolve to conquer them.

Having undertaken whatever personal reformatory measures as are required, the reforming devotee should then undertake the rectification of his relationships. Most devotees will discover that few, if any, of their relationships are satisfactory. The devotee will probably see that he has almost no confidential, and that he does not and cannot trust most of his associates. He is conscious that many of his associates have made accomodations – sometimes quite extensive – to sense gratification. Indeed, he has participated in many meetings in which the faults and shortcomings of those not present have been thoroughly examined. Yet the established patterns of relationships are such that while everyone is free to talk about others, no one is free to talk to them. In this situation, devotees find themselves standing helplessly by as they watch one of their associates sink deeper and deeper into *maya* until he finally bloops; no one is able to come to his aid. As the failing devotee falls further and further away, the criticism of him intensifies, but no one helps.

Nor can the devotees work together effectively, because they have no way of working out the inevitable differences that arise in any collective effort. When one devotee transgresses against another, the offended party will either respond in wrath or else retreat into wounded silence (complaining, however,

vociferously to others). He does not know how to approach the other devotee and openly resolve their differences. He is unable to reveal his mind without giving offense.

Under these conditions, a great stockpile of resentment builds up in time, and the atmosphere is filled with sullen undercurrents of hostility and mistrust, relieved only by periodic outbursts of anger. In this uncongenial climate, devotional relations become more and more burdensome, and materialistic people start to seem relatively nice. The devotees find themselves living in deepening isolation from one another, each enthroned in a well-fortified ivory tower of false ego. They learn to get along by avoiding each other. These are some local conditions that arise in the *milieu* of fratricidal strife.

The reformer in these circumstances can begin to renovate his relationships with his Godbrothers one by one. By getting together with one or more of his closest associates, he can establish a reformatory group. The members should meet to examine the problem of devotional relationships in ISKCON in all its ramifications. (This essay can be used as a starting point for such a discussion.) Then the members of the reforming group can unite themselves in the common endeavor to achieve the *madhyama* platform in their relationships, and together take a vow of *sadhana* and mutual aid. They should resolve to be open to correction and instruction from others, and he should tell the others of this resolve. And all the devotees should pledge their mutual help and support in the effort to remain fixed in *sadhana* so that they may become free from false ego and so enter deeper and deeper into spiritual fraternity.

We have begun in the Philadelphia temple to reform our relationships in this way, and the principles and practices discussed in this paper have arisen out of our discussions and experiences. As the reforming devotees gain practical intelligence, they will attain more insight into procedures; as this reform is taken up in different temples and under various circumstances, we should quickly be able to build a large body of practical wisdom through pooled experiences.

Some relationships will be fairly easy to renovate, but there will be others that are very difficult. Where there is a long history of enmity between devotees, it may be necessary to discuss past wrongs, and this can be painful. There will be other devotees who have been so wounded that they have become psychic if not physical hermits, and they will be extremely reluctant to again open themselves up to relationships. Still other devotees may not wish to give up an attachment to some form of sense gratification, and therefore, they will not wish to enter a frank and honest relationship. The reformers must learn how to approach these troubled devotees with great tact and delicacy. It may be best to initiate reform of difficult relationships not by confidential exchange, but by the processes recommended by Srila Rupa Goswami. One may invite someone for *prasadam*, give them a gift, or render service or favor.

Above all, the notion of honesty and openness should not be perverted to serve false ego and become an excuse for giving offense. That is another form of dishonesty.

In addition, one should guard against coming down to the mental platform, and preach or discuss these ideas about reforming relations with a devotee without actually reforming your relationships with him (if it needs it). If one simply entertains these ideas on the mental platform, they will quickly come to seem vacuous and impotent.

For essential advice in the whole endeavor of bringing ISKCON to the *madhyama* platform, one should carefully study *Sri Upadesamrta* and apply those eternal instructions. Srila Satsavarupa dasa Gosvami's *Vaishnava Behavior* and *Twenty-six Qualities of a Devotee* are also helpful.

This reform needs to take place at all levels of ISKCON. If we begin these reforms now, and steadily increase the circle of rectified relationships, then we can hope that by the next Mayapura Festival, the effort will fructify, and all of ISKCON will become unified into an indomitable, unstoppable preaching movement. The long fratricidal war will cease. Only in this way will we fulfill the order of Srila Prabhupada. The Gaudiya Matha could not fulfill Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's order by coming to the *madhyama* platform and forming a unified preaching movement. Now it is merely a loose collection of independent organizations, each one ruled by a single, supreme *acharya*. Some *mathas* are indifferent to each other, some more friendly, some hostile, depending on the relations between the different *acharyas*. But none preach cooperatively. How heart-breaking it is to see ISKCON come closer and closer every year to that same condition!

So far, the history of the modern revival of Lord Chaitanya's movement has been very much the history of the "outsider". When, in the nineteenth century, the "established" Gaudiya institutions had lost spiritual potency because of material accomadation, the next step forward came out of the "marginal" *vairagis* through the agency of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. And when the established leaders of the Gaudiya Matha lost sight of the vision and order of Srila Bhaktisiddhant Sarasvati, they were left behind holding their positions and property when the "outsider", Srila Prabhupada, proved to have inherited the spiritual power for the next step.

It is not necessary, however, for this pattern to continue, and it is much to be preferred that the leaders of ISKCON unite in this effort of reform and spiritual renewal. For those who do not, the verdict of history is quite clear: Lord Chaitanya's movement will not wait for them, and history will pass them by.

Therefore, let us together resolve to take the next step forward by doing what has not yet been done in the annals of Vaishnavism. Let us actually bring into being the great *madhyama* preaching society envisioned by Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Let us make that reformed ISKCON our grateful offering to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu on the 500th anniversary of His appearance.

Praying for the mercy at the feet of all the Vaishnavas, I respectfully submit this paper for their wise deliberation and considered judgment.

Ravindra Svarupa dasa, November 16, 1984

Editor's Note

This essay is reprinted here because so many of Ravindra's themes are very relevent to today's ISKCON and the confusion/debate surrounding the *guru* and *ritvik* issues. It is puzzling that the author of the above treatise is now, six years later, part of the ISKCON authority structure, calling for the censure of VVR, the excommunication of VVR's editors, and the denouncement of *ritvik* philosophy as "demoniac." My, how people change! Anyway, his essay still has much to offer for present day problems in the Hare Krishna movement.

Re-initiation Connection

by Suhotra Swami

SOMEONE wrote to VVR, "Maybe the GBC should have devotees who aren't on the GBC to investigate these philosophical issues." Well, the fact is that prior to the GBC discussion on the reinitiation issue (which resulted in the compilation of the paper "Maintaining Shelter in the Guru Parampara"), papers from non-GBC devotees were reviewed. I assisted in the writing of one of these papers, authored by Bhakti Vidya Purna Swami and Atma Tattva Prabhu. I don't know how influential this paper was upon the GBC's conclusions. I do know that several GBC men were dead set on requiring re-initiation in all cases, but their paper represents a stepping back from that position. In that respect, Bhakti Vidya Purna Swami, Atma Tattva dasa and myself thought that we may have done some good.

Our paper did not advocate re-initiation, nor did it exactly repudiate it. I'd like to present briefly some of the points we made, because they may add something to the discussions in VVR on this topic. Basically, we looked at the issue not as being a question of "re"-initiation but initiation and connection to Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON. In taking up the matter thusly, we made the following points:

1. Srila Prabhupada is Founder-acarya of ISKCON. "Founder-acarya" (*pradhana-acarya*) has been defined in a work entitled *Prapannamrta Tarpana* (which contains the biography of Srila Ramanujacarya). A *pradhana-acarya* has five characteristics: 1) he is the remover of the fears of all people (*dina-abhaya*), and is thus the deliverer of everyone; 2) he sheds light upon Krishna's teachings and the writings of previous acaryas by his purports; 3) he gives purports to the songs of the great Vaishnavas of the past; 4) he contributes great books (*maha-grantha*) for the welfare of all people which give the Vaishnava-*siddhanta* for everyone's understanding; and 5) because of his expertise in presenting Vaishnava-*siddhanta*, the Vaishnava philosophy becomes identified with his name (e.g. Bhaktisiddhanta purports). This definition is found in P.T. 62.47-53. In the Sri Vaishnava line, the Founder-acarya is known as *uddharaka* (savior of all fallen souls). The gurus who come after him are called *upakaraka* (helpers of the Founder-acarya).

2. ISKCON, the movement established by the Founder-acarya, is the dynamic institution of five exceptionally potent items of the 64 limbs of devotional service. These are association with devotees, chanting the holy name, hearing *Srimad Bhagavatam*, living in a holy dhama or temple, and worshiping the Deity. Take any of these away, and you don't have ISKCON. In CC Madhya 22.133 and *Bhakti-rasamritasindhu* 1.2.238 it is stated that even the slight performance of any of these five limbs of devotional service is so potent that it can uplift anyone to the platform of *bhava*, even if the service is done without faith. The only condition is that such service must be offenseless.

3. There are three *vidhis* or methods of initiation: the *bhagavata vidhi*, the *pancharatrika vidhi* (see *Teachings of Queen Kunti* p. 115 and SB 7.5.23-24, purport). In this *vidhi*, *panchama-samskaras pancharatrika* initiation are not essential (C.C. M. 15.108). One need only receive the holy name from the lips of a pure devotee or his representative, as seen in Lord Chaitanya's spreading of the holy name in South India. But in ISKCON, because of our tendency to offend the holy name, *nama-diksha* is given in the context of *pancharatrika* initiation (C.C. Adi 7.76, purport). The *panchamasamskaras* are: acceptance of *tilaka*, acceptance of *Tulasi-mala* and other symbols in the service of the Lord (*mudra dharana*), acceptance of a name of a servant of Krishna (*nama grahana*), acceptance of *pancharatrika mantras* and taking a vow of service to the Deity.

4. In *Sri Hari Nama Chintamani*, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura states that the other *mantras* given in initiation (the *vaidika brahmana gayatri* and the *pancharatrika puja mantras*) are *nama-atmika* (deriving their life from the Hare Krishna *Mahamantra*).

5. Since the essence of *nama-diksha* is hearing the holy name of the Lord from a pure devotee or his representative, "re"-initiation happens whenever we chant *japa* in the temple with our prabhus, for instance, or go to *arati*, or on *harinama*, and thus chant and hear in the association of pure followers of Srila Prabhupada. The heart question in the issue of re-initiation is, "Are we offending the holy name?" If the chanting is going on in pure association and without offence, then the transcendental effect cannot be calculated (*duryoadbhuta viryo 'smin*). Even if the *upakara-guru* falls, if we remain under the shelter of the *uddharaka* and within his movement of the five potent limbs of devotional service, our spiritual position is intact SO LONG AS WE ARE NOT OFFENDERS TO THE HOLY NAME. One need not even be re-initiated into the secondary *mantras*, since they draw life from the holy name.

6. However, if one is an offender to the holy name then he must take shelter of the Vaishnavas for rectification. This point is made again and again in the *Hari Nama Chintamani*. This taking shelter is in fact acceptance of *siksha*, which does not supersede the relationship with the *uddharaka* Founder-acarya but gives help to that relationship. One need not find "one and one only" siksha helper. Kala-krishna dasa (Lord Chaitanya's servant on His South Indian tour) had four helpers who rectified him, even though he'd been rejected by Mahaprabhu Himself.

7. Another way of looking at the above point is, we take formal initiation (*bhajana-kriya*: see BG 4.10, purport) to propel us to *anartha-nivritti* and onward to the *bhava* stage, where *vaidhi-bhakti* ends and *raganuga-bhakti* begins [Editor's note: *raganuga-bhakti* begins more likely at *asakti*]. But if we slip below the waterline of the standards for initiation (i.e. fail to follow 4 regulative principles and chant 16 rounds daily), we surely have to rise to *bhajana-kriya* again before contemplating onward progress. That is very difficult if the initiator (our appointed helper in devotional service) has fallen away himself. In this case, it would only seem prudent to advise the devotee to be re-initiated (i.e. become qualified to chant the holy name at least in the *namabhasa* stage). That devotee should take help from others who are chanting without offence, even if they are *madhyama-adhikaris*, because they are only helping – it's Srila Prabhupada who is saving. I don't think that formal re-initiation would have to be given in such a case, but it might help. That would have to be seen according to the relationship between helper and helped.

8. While formal re-initiation is not required for a properly

situated devotee, he may need help in divesting himself of attachment to or further association with the fallen *guru*. for this he may accept shelter and instruction from a senior devotee in whom he has faith.

I think you may also want to consider that there are devotees of fallen gurus who feel reinitiation is needed for their own continued advancement in spiritual life. They've arrived at this conclusion without any urging from higher quarters.

Comment, by Karnamrita Dasa:

There are ideas worthy of consideration in this presentation and some interesting facts presented too. With respect to the terminology, it is interesting that Maharaja uses the phrase *pradhana-acharya* to indicate our Founder Acharya. The word *pradhana* generally translates as "chief" or "predominant" rather than "founder". Certainly, Srila Prabhupada is meant to be the predominant guru of the ISKCON branch of the Chaitanya Tree. The word *samsthapaka-acharya* is the usual term for Founder Acharya, however. As regards the idea expressed above, that one constantly receives re-initiation by hearing the Holy Name chanted by associating with Vaishnavas – I think this idea is a little contrived and cannot be substantiated by scripture. If by "intiation" we mean *diksha*, then that term has a precise meaning, as pointed out by Srila Jiva Gosvami in particular. To reiterate, *diksha* means investing a disciple with transcendental knowledge (*divya-jnana*) and effecting the destruction of his sins (*papa-samkshaya*). To my knowledge, once *diksha* is given it is given, If one factually receives *divya-jnana*, how is he to be deprived of that by the mere fact of his initiator falling down? And *divya-jnana* does not mean "connection", for "connection" essentially means acceptance of the conclusion of the *sampradaya*. Similarly, if the initiate has been cleansed of his sinful reactions, are we to suppose that he becomes re-poluted by the sins eradicated by the *guru* if the *guru* falls down? While there may be circumstances under which "re-initiation" is necessary, e.g. where *divya-jnana* was never really transmitted in the first place, I cannot but feel that neither the GBC ideologists nor Suhotra Svami have really grasped the true meaning of *diksha*. If real understanding of this basic concept is lacking, how are we to arrive at proper conclusions with regards to other aspects of the *guru*-disciple relationship?

Humility & the GBC

edited by Nityananda dasa

THE Guru Debate in ISKCON is inextricably tied to the GBC and its past history. Why? Because, since the very beginning – since Srila Prabhupada's physical demise, if not before – the leading GBC members assumed false positions as autocratic Successor *Acharyas*, significantly misinterpreting and misrepresenting the mission of Krishna consciousness as given to us by Srila Prabhupada. Unfortunately, many of the philosophical distortions from that previous system still exist to this day in the *status quo* and conceptual understandings of ISKCON *guru-sishya* relationships. Needless to say, "Since the relationship of a devotee with his spiritual master is so important..." (to quote the first line of the 1989 GBC paper), the repercussions reflect in all relationships and functions of the Krishna consciousness movement.

Although there has been a degree of genuine effort – and by some more than others – to end the improprieties and restore a truer theology, the balance has yet to be struck. On account of the continuing discrepancies amongst individual GBC members and the negligence on the part of the GBC to rectify the problem (nay, even worse, canonizing it, viz. the 1989 *Guru-asraya* paper) a concomitant unwholesomeness pervades our society in the form of dissatisfaction and mistrust in our society's leadership. The entire institution of the guru in ISKCON has become suspect. From all appearances, therefore, it seems that the phantom of the past (ie.: DADS, the "Deadly Acharya Disease Syndrome") continues to haunt us. The searing doubt scourges within many, many devotees' minds: "In our attempt to improve and unify the Society (as the GBC professes to be doing) *how can we correct mistakes that the GBC, both individually and as a body, refuses to openly admit*?"

Mistakes are made by a person(s). And it takes a person to propound a philosophy (e.g.: Gautama, Kanada, Kapila, etc). Furthermore: "All acts presuppose philosophy, and all philosophy engenders acts." Everything is based on philosophy, what to speak of its prominent role in a religious institution such as ours. If we want to rid ourselves of past misconceptions – the philosophy of the Zonal Acharyas – and simultaneously absolve ourselves of the grievous offenses committed thereby, then the most immediate and effective remedy is for *those persons originally responsible to publicly – clearly and openly – disavow their former positions of falsity.*

Unless and until this is done, our society will be everlastingly flustered in the confusion of double standards (one *guru* demands a protocol like this and another like that) and plagued by the inconsonant wrangling of dissident parties whose deep hurt and frustration has never been consoled. Theoretically, all this was resolved in the "Great Reform of 1987". But it wasn't, obviously. Otherwise, why are we faced with so much widespread unrest today?

Too often and easily, the present GBC, like their predecessors, has passed critical elements off as rumor-mongers, speculators, and as "simply envious", etc. with the trite diversion (*argumentum ad hominem*), "What are they doing for ISKCON?" But, as Prabhupada noted, "To every rumor, there's a grain of truth." And quite frankly, there's enough credence in ISKCON's backroom talk to fill up a few silos. It's up to the GBC to divert this shameful waste of energy from so many frustrated devotees back into the *sankirtan* movement by regaining their confidence. And all it takes is a little *honesty*. That's really what everyone wants to see – some genuine Vaishnava humility.

The GBC's present mood, however, is to disregard the possibility that anything ever was wrong with the GBC. Criticism is met with reprobation and disdain rather than self-introspection and regret. For instance, instead of responding to the specific charges by *Vedic Village Review* & Co. that the GBC, since 1977, has been delinquent in dealing with vital issues (and with substantial evidence to make it a serious case), Ravindra-Svarupa P, as GBC Vice-Chairman, both in his

November '89 and January '90 circulars, rebuffs VVR through patent argumentative tactics – a typical bureaucratic reaction. Invoking pontifical powers, he then condemns VVR's editors, in turn, of propagating the "actual hoax" and ominously portends doom over anyone who is so unfortunate to give ear to their ideas, "[Such persons] will be lost," without squarely dealing with the gist of their assertions. Thus, on both occasions, by not even once acknowledging there was ever any problem – despite the fact that the former Zonal Acharya System was a documented anomaly for over ten years (and is still going on in some places) with tragic and catastrophic consequences upon our movement – Ravindra-Svarupa completely avoids the real point of contention: *The GBC, as exclusively as they have been operating (as opposed to cooperating), has been incompetent to direct Srila Prabhupada's mission.* Rather, Ravindra's theme and conclusion, by using superficial logic (the "stretch" technique) is that whatever the GBC does is "always liberated". The purport to this is nothing less than insidious: History is repeating itself.

Regardless of the imperfections in our beloved GBC leaders, we accept their motive as sincere – to keep ISKCON united. But the unity of our movement is based on purity. Without purity there can be no lasting unity. And that *purity is insured by the determination of our leadership to act as humble FOLLOWERS* – then, God willing, menial instruments – *of Prabhupada's will.*

Lacking genuine Vaishnava humility, however, even a most qualified leader must ultimately be disgraced. Possession of humility is the lowest man's saving grace as well: "A king [or an executive head] is saved by a soft nature"; "A family is maintained by humility." This cultivation of a humble mood by all of our society's members is what will hold ISKCON together. For the leadership, however, this humility is most essential: "Leader is one who is the best follower." Lacking Prabhupada's physical direction to reconcile our conflicts, this is the most pressing need of the day – humility.

"The GBC should all be the instructor gurus. This is not a title, but you must actually come to this platform." (SPL to Madhudvisha 8/4/75)

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has affirmed that the most important quality for a preacher, or an instructor of Krishna consciousness, is *humility*. And humility means "awareness of one's shortcomings".

Srila Prabhupada explains in this regard (SB 6.2.27 purport):

"The *duty* of a pure devotee is to REGRET his past sinful activities... Not only should one give up his past bad habits, but he must ALWAYS REGRET his past sinful acts. This is the *standard* of pure devotion."

Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura informs us that in addition to the *anarthas* arising from previous sinful activities are the impediments which arise simultaneous to the cultivation of *bhakti*: acquisition of material wealth and other facilities, worship and respect by others, comfortable position, fame, etc. Catering to these subtle weeds of sin covers the real plant of *bhakti*. As such, it is also despicable to those who aspire for pure devotion. Srila Prabhupada therefore advises: "This [regret] helps one to advance in spiritual life."

Given the GBC's outstanding blunders, in order for the GBC members to properly qualify as the "ultimate managing authority of ISKCON" as per Srila Prabhupada's instructions, this mood of humble regret is their first and foremost business.

Maharaja Vena and Maharaja Prithu were both "ultimate managing authorities". But one was a despot who tortured *brahmanas* and devotees, whereas the other took all counsel and guidance from them. The House of Cardinals in the Roman Catholic Church is also another type of "ultimate managing authority". (Is that where ISKCON is headed?) The GBC should definitively establish who is their paradigm.

Inspiring a cooperative spirit by their own humble example will solve our society's problems. Then, when the GBC asks to be forgiven, all sincere devotees will be willing to forgive. And "To forgive is to forget". Otherwise, there is no solution to the tensions building up within ISKCON short of more alienation, schism and bloodshed.

In the past, we saw the so-called strictest followers fall down on account of false pride and attachment to big position, name, fame, etc. That natural law of gravity doesn't change now either. But if our leaders instead feel themselves all the way down in humility – showing it, not just speaking it – then they can be considered "infallible", in the sense that they can go nowhere else except "up". Then they will factually be exalted.

And then only, in such a spirit of meekness, will Prabhupada and the *acharyas* be pleased to impart infallible instructions for the unchecked progress of our movement. Or at least, when the GBC does commit mistakes, we will more readily overlook them to give the GBC benefit of the doubt. Someone may not be perfect, but if he is honest, you can still trust him. But how to have faith in someone who cannot even be straightforward?

The onus, therefore, is ultimately on the GBC, as the proponents of unity and purity, to see the dire situation in ISKCON and address it accordingly – decisively – just as they started to do three years ago. After all, it was the GBC who originally got us into this mess 12 years ago. It is incumbent upon them to get us out. GBC! Wake up and act appropriately to set things straight !

Ritvikvada Endorsed

by Janajanmadih dasa

THE June 1990 VVR was the first information I have received that the GBC had taken such an inimical stand regarding Ritvik Acharya Philosophy. I was, of course, concerned that I follow the actual *siddhanta* of the *sastra* on this issue. I prayed within my heart that Srila Prabhupada please guide me on this issue. I then "discovered" two applicable *Bhagavatam* purports on the same page, 4.30.8 and 4.30.10. The first purport states, "Disunity between individual souls is so strong within this material world that even in a society of Krishna consciousness, members sometimes appear disunited due to their having different opinions and leaning toward material things. Actually in Krishna consciousness there cannot be two opinions. There is only one goal: to serve Krishna to one's best ability." (SB 4.30.8.) The second purport states, "This is the way of the *parampara* system. If we follow the *acharyas*, we attain the same benefit as our predecessors. If one follows the decisions of Arjuna, he should be considered to be

directly hearing *BhagavadGita* from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There is no difference between hearing *Bhagavad-Gita* directly from the Supreme Lord and following a personality like Arjuna, who formerly heard *Bhagavad-Gita* directly from the Lord. Sometimes foolish people argue that since Krishna is not present at the moment, one cannot take direct instruction from Him. Such foolish people do not know that there is no difference between directly hearing *Bhagavad-Gita* and reading it, as long as one accepts *Bhagavad-Gita* as it is spoken by the Lord." (SB 4.30.10.) I do not believe those two purports are accidentally next to one another.

I also came across the text and purports to CC Mad 24.329-30 which state, "Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu replied to Sanatana Goswami, '...In your book there should be the characteristics of the bona fide *guru* and bona fide disciple. Then, before accepting a spiritual master, one can be assured of the spiritual master's position. The *guru* must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service... Such a *guru* can accept disciples from all over the world. This is the test of the *guru*... When one has attained the topmost position of *mahabhagavata*, he is to be accepted as *guru*... Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of *guru*."

I am convinced that you have rightly concluded that Srila Prabhupada wanted a *ritvik acharya* system until such time as a "self-effulgent" *acharya* appeared. I want to offer my encouragement on this very important issue. You are being attacked for failing to be humble, but humble means I am a slave of the slave of a Vaishnava.

The Ritvik Acharya Philosophy is also the philosophy hat has the least possible influence from personal profit, distinction and adoration. The GBC and so-called ISKCON *acharyas* should consider the following advice: "Don't allow your attention to be disturbed by tiny acquisitions like prestige or gain which is relative to money or comfort. Remember, you are trying for the greatest thing, and all other things are very small in comparison to Krishna consciousness." (B.R. Sridhara Maharaja)

On a more positive note, here is a consideration about the mission of Sriman Mahaprabhu. We know that Lord Chaitanya desires that in every town and village His Holy Names be known. However, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has revealed that it is also the desire of Lord Chaitanya that Ten Principle Doctrines [Ed. *Dasa-mula*] of Lord Chaitanya be made known to everyone on the face of the earth. Srila Bhaktivinoda composed a verse containing the Ten Principle Doctrines of Lord Chaitanya. The verse and translation can be had from VVR by sending them a self-addressed stamped envelope. Preaching must have focus. Just like in a commercial advertising campaign a few themes are selected and then repeated again and again to the masses. Many people are now aware that Hare Krishna devotees exist, but the masses still do not know what we believe. So I am humbly suggesting that our campaign now is to specifically preach the Ten Principle Doctrines of Lord Chaitanya. Srila Bhaktivinoda has explained these ten principle doctrines in his book *Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: His Life and Precepts.* (available from Vedic River)

ISKCON
International Society for Krishna Consciousness Inc.

Unity in ISKCON

by Punyatama dasa, Three Rivers

I would like to thank VVR for creating a forum through which devotees can debate and analyze the structure of ISKCON both theologically and institutionally – an independent checks-and-balances system that cannot be controlled by a few politically motivated leaders, who as we have seen in the past, have had the ability to politically rule over spiritual standards and correct adherence to Srila Prabhupada on an institutional level. I would also like to express appreciation to the GBC and devotees throughout ISKCON for their sincerity in maintaining Prabhupada's society and for all of their preaching efforts.

To those of us who have been involved in ISKCON over the years, we should recognize our indebtedness for the spiritual training and opportunity afforded us for spiritual advancement. Of course, at this point, many of you are saying the GBC has not properly maintained Prabhupada's society, or the VVR is politically motivated, so please bear with me. The purpose of my writing is a humble attempt to clarify the status of the GBC, VVR and the greater community of Vaishnavas, many of whom are not involved institutionally with ISKCON.

In reading VVR issues 1 through 12 and the *ISKCON Journal*, I would like to thank both publications for greatly aiding my realizations. I would like to thank VVR for initiating the beginning of a long awaited attempt for clarification of many issues, especially the *guru* issue and for enticing the GBC into some long-awaited public discussion with their Godbrothers.

In review of both publications and the San Diego GBC Meeting video, it is apparent to many that the debate to some degree is tinged with a reluctance to appreciate the valid points that were being made by both parties and in return only commanding a portion of their readers' or viewers' adherence. The Six Goswamis of Vrindavana as we know would sit and constructively criticize one another, not taking offense but appreciating that they were trying to aid each others' realization.

We need to develop this mood amongst ourselves. This letter that was written to Srila Prabhupada by the VVR to reveal the truth to us, in this matter will most likely be answered through continued discussion and study of Prabhupada's books, *sravanam kirtanam*, honesty will be inspired by the presence of the absolute truth. Or do we just dismiss another faction due to our lack of ability to define an understanding to the point of acceptance by all within reason?

We dismissed the disciples who went to Sridhara Maharaja, many of whom will tell you they opted for Sridhara Maharaja in preference to thirteen leaders whom they did not trust, who were fully aligned with Srila Prabhupada's instructions and who distorted Prabhupada's prominence in ISKCON. What can be done to create unity between us under the banner of ISKCON is yet to be seen, but by no means is an impossibility.

The GBC should not be so quick to dismiss VVR for trying to clarify these issues which have been like clouds in our society. Since the departure of Srila Prabhupada, opening these issues for further discussion and higher realization has been a necessity. I am not condoning the VVR's vilification of the GBC, many of whom are new and stable members who have inherited the mistrust, but my feelings are that because their Godbrothers have never had a forum to speak out and discuss GBC decisions and procedures, a lot of this initial anger is due to

years of suppression being suddenly released. To dismiss VVR and hundreds or thousands of devotees who are studying this issue by waving an absolute wand will only expand the illfeelings and disunity.

Communication can greatly aid the GBC relationship with its Godbrothers. If we are actually interested in trying to re-create unity amongst the greater community of devotees, then we must discuss these issues until the truth is staring us in the face. The absolute wand of the GBC must turn into an attentive ear. We have seen thousands of devotees leave this movement because of political intrigue and lack of perspective of their future roll within ISKCON, resulting in a huge loss of preaching momentum. The *ISKCON Journal* is greatly appreciated despite the fact that it contains many of the characteristics being criticized in the VVR, but does not fulfill the needs of the greater ISKCON. The individual GBC opinions have never fully represented the realizations of the body of devotees that they represent and never will, leaving Godbrothers no avenues to clarify their opinions for discussion, which is denying the needs of those they represent. Any bitterness, like the poison of a boil, will come out if we let the issues be properly clarified to everyone's reasonable satisfaction. The VVR, despite its rough edges is beginning to deal with this need.

The GBC promise of an occasional journal, considering that this is the first in thirteen years, at this point is not fully acceptable to the greater ISKCON due to its past inability to be fully open on all issues. The principal of unity in diversity could be accomplished by the marriage of both publications – the marriage of the regularity and checks and balances of a slightly more balanced VVR and the openness, honesty and cooperation of the ISKCON Governing Body, which is responsible for instilling trust in every living entity on this planet, what to speak of redeveloping the trust of the many Godbrothers, who are sitting on the sidelines due to their inability to relate to an institution in which they have had no facility for being heard. *Ishtha Ghoshti* means 'I say, you say'. [Ed. *ishta* means 'desired', *ghoshti*, 'assembly'.] The *ISKCON Journal* is at this point *ishta* and the VVR *ghoshti*. Put them together with fair guidelines and we have honesty and humility in the works which will result in unity, and we can continue with renewed enthusiasm to solve our differences and continue preaching to the souls who mostly are dependent on the causeless mercy of a united ISKCON.

It is very difficult to function wholeheartedly within an institution that is steeped in diversity. ISKCON is the most important institution on this planet, and its continued programs of book distribution, *prasadam* distribution, festivals, deity worship, etc. are glorious. Despite ISKCON's greatness, we have seen two personality cults emerge from unqualified *gurus* and many other factions develop wreaking havoc in our society. It is in the entire planet's interest that we absolutely define this issue to the point of effulgent truthfulness, so our society can be united. We must develop a form of communication that is acceptable to all and develop unity of vision throughout the greater ISKCON. The process of Krishna consciousness affords us the opportunity to eradicate our *karmic* reactions, transcend the modes of material nature and develop love for Krishna. Everyday, hundreds of thousands of people are dying without having been given this spiritual opportunity. A united ISKCON can reach so many more. They are depending on our cooperating to provide spiritual clarity and a stable institution. No one is qualified to say that they have all the answers, considering that we have all made lots of mistakes in the past. Let's be patient and let the process of *sravanam-kirtanam* be the solution to the problem. I humbly beg you to forgive any offenses contained in this letter.

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

Though the point is well taken, that one would ideally like to see a synthesis of the ideas of the opposing factions in the greater ISKCON, I fear that is an unlikely resolution of our dilemma. There are some basic points on which the two sides seem totally unable to concur, e.g., that Srila Prabhupada can be directly approached by new devotees, even through deputees. The GBC dogma cries a resounding 'NO!' to such an idea, though no doubt, they are not convinced of that to a man, and some of them are first-class men, we know! In order to establish this mundane doctrine, however, the institution has had to totally disregard certain of Srila Prabhupada's teachings, e.g. that one may accept Jesus Christ as his spiritual master through the agency of a priest or clergyman. Thus we see the GBC endorsing, publishing and enforcing a position that contradicts Srila Prabhupada's teachings and must thus be recognised for what it is: a philosophical deviation. Now, it may be that the VVR editors have misinterpreted some point of Srila Prabhupada's teachings. The GBC, however, has not stopped at misinterpretation; they have blatantly disregarded and contradicted vital aspects of his teachings, such as his teaching on Jesus as *guru*. How then shall we compromise? The point must also be recognised, that the *ISKCON Journal* was a dishonest, insidious, draconian attempt to stifle dissent and to perpetuate *apasiddhanta,* that was the brainchild of a small faction of Machiavellians who would enforce their will by almost any means, foul or fair. These are very strong words, I admit. I sincerely mean no offence, but we have to fight to preserve Srila Prabhupada's teachings and must speak unequivocally in order to do so. If the GBC wishes to prove us wrong, then please let them do so. We do not wish to be in error. However, they are not going to disuade us from our path by simply bludgeoning us over our heads with rhetoric and melodramatic threats of spiritual extinction.

There Are Still Questions...

by Bhakti Vikas Swami

I have just finished reading VVR 13 and am reminded of the incident wherein Raghunatha dasa was locked up, Hiranya and Govardhana having run away from fear of the Muslim tax collector. At that time, Raghunatha told the Muslim tax collector, "My father and uncle and yourself are all brothers. Sometimes you fight among yourselves, and sometime in the future you will all be together again in a friendly mood." So I hope that this mess will all get sorted out soon, and we can all be together again peacefully – although at the present time, the verbal war has reached unprecedented heights of intensity. (Of course, from the GBC point of view, the battles are all over, and victory

is declared, but there are some guerrillas out there who keep fighting.) As you note, all issues won't be settled until all the truth on all matters is clear – philosophy, not sentiment or fanaticism, will prevail. And although I think that you have not clearly established the ritvik idea in at all a convincing style, that this is actually what Prabhupada wanted (which you will certainly have to do if you expect it to be implemented – it is such a major issue), I also think that the GBC have not answered major questions. I wish they would, because I've got one young devotee practically insisting on taking initiation from me, and I'd like some clear authorized perspective to give him that I'm not going to have to change every couple of years to keep up with the latest ideas. "Monitor guru" seems to be the most suitable position for me – an older student guiding a younger one, who may well surpass the monitor as he grows older but will always remain faithful and respectful to him; the teacher of both is the same. *'Nikunja-yuno'* etc. in relation to me? Not even a joke; it's ridiculous. Do I have to pretend to have attained *manjari*-hood? What are those initiated by our Godbrothers supposed to think when they sing *'nikunja-yuno'* and *'romanca kampa'*, etc. when the guru can't even get up for *mangala-arati*? These matters need careful looking into.

Thank you for the words on my travelling program and request for donations. I have been on the road with the bus since December. The program is good though we do not visit many villages, rather, mostly outlying towns: schools, colleges, Rotary and Lions' clubs, temples, Life Members' homes and other places – lots of programs (sometimes 3 or 4 a day), park the bus in the bazar for book distribution, a little street Harinama now and then, enrol Life Members, stop in at holy places and bathe in holy rivers along the way. Lots of fun, simple life, hard work, ideal for *brahmacharis*. Mostly in Andhra Pradesh, pious, cultured, devotionally inclined and philosophical people, good opportunities for English medium preaching to the educated classes. Please print this invitation to any male devotees to come and join, short or long term. Donations also welcome.

A thought: Despite all difficulties they may encounter, please encourage devotees to stay in ISKCON (I mean the society working under the jurisdiction of the GBC); if only for the reason to keep it going. We are all hopeful of a better future; Srila Prabhupada gave his blood for ISKCON and we have to preserve it as well as purify it, otherwise it will be very difficult to spread Lord Chaitanya's mission. At least for the sake of the Deities and temples Prabhupada established; let's not see them neglected (I understand the situation in America is very run-down in many places). All glories to the devotees struggling in once vibrant temples to keep them going.

Bhakti-vikas Svami received by dignatories of a village in Andhra Pradesh, South India

Greater ISKCON Bulletin Board

Compiled by Nityananda dasa

NORTH CALIFORNIA

Everone knows about the centers in San Francisco on Carl St. and in Berkeley on Stuart St. We have written earlier about the devotees in the Lafayette area about 20 miles east of Berkeley, and of the devotees in the Nevada City area about 60 miles northeast of Sacramento. Now we have learned of another group of Prabhupada devotees, including Murari Prabhu, centered around Clear Lake, about 80 miles north of San Francisco. Murari says they have regular Sunday feasts and gatherings, and want to distribute a quantity of small books to guests and friends. And in Nevada City, Gopala, Haripada and ten others do *Harinama* every Saturday.

FORT MEYERS & NAPLES, FLORIDA:

Dravinaksha Prabhu writes: "Devotees who have settled in the sunny sub-tropics of Southwest Florida have regular Sunday feasts, *Harinama*, college preaching, farming and inter-devotee businesses. Vaishnava snowbirds welcome! Contact Dravinaksha 813-455-4287 or Rasatala 813-463-1057." Also there are Jnanagamya, Mahamaya, Chaturatma and family. Chaturatma & Rasatala operate their own health food store called Nature's Bounty. They have great soil, beaches and mangoes. Carry on and keep us posted!

NOTICE TO DEVOTEES

Unfortunately I was recently cheated by Nityarupa dasi (aka Ganga dasi, former wife of Hrishikesa), a Jayapataka Swami disciple, who resides in Atlanta with her husband Arjuna. She broke a business agreement by selling the collateral involved, and then she left the country. She markets lower quality gems, and my advice is to avoid her with business. I got beat pretty bad, apparently I am not the first, so be forewarned. Her husband could not help me; he is a pujari in Atlanta temple. (Nityananda dasa)

NEW JAIPUR NEWS

We are proceeding cautiously with our cow breeding, and a calf was finally born the day before Radhashtami. Rishi Kumara named the heifer Radhika. Rishi repaired the barn (circa 1790) and is busy training oxen when the fencing work is sorta caught up. Now Govardhana Prabhu is deciding which ox he will train up for his own homestead. As the *kshatriyas* would previously give charity, so we are giving a bull to those serious about tilling the land. Land, oxen and more, come free with the life estate program.

The gurukula is coming along nicely. Dharmasetu was requested to become Headmaster and is now being trained as a teacher by Chandrika dasi. There are four teachers and only 18 students. We are laying the groundwork to accomodate many more families' children. The hours have been changed, 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM.

A series of life estates are about to be granted, to Mother Chandrika, Karnamrita, Pundarika, Govardhana, Mukunda, Dharmasetu and others.

Pundarika and Govardhana Prabhus are working five days a week to establish their homesteads. The idea is that soon they should be able to reduce their outside work for money to 3 or 4 days a week and then spend more time to realize their agricultural goals of growing food in 1 or 2 years' time. They already have their home, vehicle, appliances, basic necessities and land primed for food production. They want to provide an example to others as to how easy it is to set up your family in the country. Frugal, simple living, in the association of devotees, yet with all the modern conveniences. This is serious business, this food business!

Chandrika and Jahnavi Prabhus were invited to a Jackson, MS Home Schooling Conference for displaying BBT books. After arriving, it was obvious they did not know what the BBT was. The conference with publishers' displays was held at a Baptist Church, and Chandrika was forcibly refunded her exhibitor's deposit. She was told she could not exhibit her books. Very politely Chandrika complied and spent the day talking to the hundreds present. Many apologized for the behaviour of the coordinators, and appreciated her tolerance. Many inquired about the New Jaipur Gurukula, our schooling techniques and Krishna consciousness. Next year, they promised, we can exhibit our books.

Govinda's Health Foods (our undercover *prasadam* outlet) moved to our own building on Franklin street, getting four times the space for future growth. Victorian Empire and Second Empire merged in new quarters, and we now have the largest selection of antiques in Natchez. There are a dozen other antique shops here, and tourism is expected to reach millions of visitors per year within a few years. We are trying to develop a solid financial base from which we can develop the *varnashram* program in New Jaipur.

FRIENDS OF LORD KRISHNA, Nevada County, CA:

The big news from Nevada County is that His Holiness Trivikrama Svami has opened a preaching center here in the beautiful hills of the Sierria Nevada Mountains of California. This Summer was an active one for the congregation of 25 to 30 members. They have a regular Sunday Feast, a Monday and Friday *Bhagavad-Gita* Class, Saturday *Harinama* in downtown Nevada City, all major festivals are well attened and special events just keep coming up. The Manipur Dance troupe headed by His Holiness Bhaki Swarupa Damodara Gosvami gave two public preformances at the local Nevada City Theatre to near Capacity crowds of very satisfied guests. The Manipuris stayed for two weeks enlivining the locals and being enlivened by an enviroment they likened to their homeland. They have an ambitious winter preaching program planned that includes trips to the nearby Chico State University and a 12 week Saturday Night Video Series. Devotees in the area are self sufficient and are engaged in all varieties of occupations from appliances repairmen to real estate brokers. Some how or other, by the Causeless Mercy of His Grace Srila Prabhupada, they have found a nice place to raise their families and still advance in Krishna Consciousness. May they always be so fortunate to swim in the association of devotees, enlivening and enlightning one another. Persons interested in visiting their community may write: Gopala dasa, 14346 Knobcone Dr, Penn Valley CA 95946.

TEMPLE OF LORD CHAITANYA, Honolulu

Drishtadyumna, Guru Kripa and other Prabhus have set up a non-profit corporation here, selling tee shirts to tourists by the bushel baskets. They are contributing handsomely to the BBT, supporting Krishna conscious projects in various places, and actively preaching in the islands. Guru Kripa Prabhu is considering undertaking the restoration of certain holy spots in Vrindavan, such as Bhaktivinoda's house at Radha Kunda and the *samadhis* of the Goswamis. "If we get any money, spend it for Krishna", says Drishtadyumna Prabhu! He has offered to help devotees who want to attend the Greater ISKCON Convention in New Jaipur May 1991, but may not be able to arrange transportation due to poverty. Contact: McDonough, 931 Onaha St, Honolulu, HI 96816.

The GBC's prayer answered! Lord Nrisimhadeva comes to New Jaipur—smiling.

Devotees from Prabhupada's Sankirtan Center perform regular Harinama-sankirtan in New York City's Manhattan.

Nityananda dasa Eats Humble Pie

Humble Pie

Ingredients:

8" unbaked pie shell

for filling

2 cups yoghurt
1/3 cup dried apricots, cooked and chopped
1/3 cup raisins
1/3 cup dates, chopped
1/2 cup walnuts, chopped
1/2 cup carob bits
few pieces of crystalized ginger (optional)
1/2 cup corn starch
1/2 cup turbinado sugar
1/2 cup pure cane syrup, or molasses, honey or some other liquid sweetener

Hang the yoghurt for some time to eliminate whey. Mix all the ingredients for the filling together. Bake in a pie shell for 45 minutes at 350 degrees. Top with whipped cream when cool. Offer to the Lord – then eat humble pie!

New Jaipur girls perform Tulasi Arati

Mother Vichitra-vasini bakes for Govinda's in New Jaipur kitchen

Pundarika Prabhu's Nimai now in motion

LETTERS To The Editors

From Bhaktarupa Prabhu, GBC Secretary, late 1989:

The issue of New Jaipur's entrance into ISKCON is a complicated one...In attempting to establish that New Jaipur should be accepted...your arguments are, at best, minor points which do not consider the need for institutional integrity in ISKCON...The loyalty of the devotees there to the mission of ISKCON is certainly commendable, and there has never been any question about whether New Jaipur's preaching is bona fide. The temple presidents in Chicago were very emphatic that all the rules and regulations that they have to follow to keep the privilege of being in ISKCON be agreed to by someone seeking entry. They understand that by making rules certainly some will be excluded. They understand that formal institutions are easy targets for criticism of self-serving illiberality. But they also understand that Srila Prabhupada, [who] gave certain rules to follow, knew full well the possible consequences of such formalities. All ISKCON temples have to swallow hard when it comes time to pay an international fee, file a report, or tolerate a seemingly insensitive regulation, but they do it for the sake of the institution as a whole.

From all reports, the spiritual standards there are quite high. This is also commendable, but other standards must also be met, and from my understanding, there is unwillingness to meet these other standards. I certainly hope that your community can meet the requirements... because New Jaipur would be an asset to ISKCON. Please do not think that the requirements are ill-motivated. Regardless of the difficulties perceived in meeting them, if a sincere attempt is made, the Vaishnavas will reciprocate in kind.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

There are always rules in any organization or society, and very few devotees object to following some rules. They are required to make order out of chaos. But when the rules require subservience to a GBC which has deviated from the teachings of Srila Prabhupada and when those rules demand acceptance of a bogus *guru* system contrary to *sastra*, then we have a problem. Although not said outright, VVR and New Jaipur cannot be accepted officially as part of ISKCON because we are perceived as a serious threat to the established order and interests of the ISKCON *Guru* Club.

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

The letters written to Vasudeva Prabhu by Srila Prabhupada with respect to the Fiji temple are most instructive in this regard. Srila Prabhupada, noting that Vasudeva was unwilling to place his trust in the GBC and to accept GBC trusteeship of the temple he had established, told Vasudeva that he could not use the ISKCON name in connection with his temple nor collect funds in the name of ISKCON. He told Vasudeva that he would still be his disciple and that he would continue to guide him as such. He never told Vasudeva that he could not be part of ISKCON, nor did he ever declare that he wanted "an institution, not just a loose association of preachers"! These are Bhaktarupa's words, not Srila Prabhupada's.

Srila Prabhupada told us we would show our love for him by cooperating with one another. Regrettably, many GBC men have interpreted "cooperation" as unquestioning submission to the GBC. One of our main difficulties, at the time this matter arose, was with GBC trusteeship of New Jaipur, a reluctance which was based, not unreasonably, on the GBC's record of scandalous falldowns, selling vital temples, mismanagement of funds, absolutism, and so forth, since Srila Prabhupada's disappearance. It is also interesting to note that despite the GBC never having "admitted" us into ISKCON in the first place, they now intend to expel us from ISKCON!

From Gauridasa Pandita dasa, Auburn, WA:

In 1977 Prabhupada was receiving letters from Temple presidents recommending devotees for initiation. Prabhupada said to wait because he was too sick. Tamala kept reading more requests for initiation and Prabhupada kept putting them off. Then one morning as I was fanning him in the garden, all of the sudden Prabhupada said, "Tomorrow I shall announce some ritvik acharyas who shall initiate disciples on my behalf when I leave the planet." This was big news and later I related the information to Smara Hari Prabhu, who told Yasodanandana Maharaja, who told Tamala Krishna Goswami, who was furious at me. He called me into his office and told me that I was finished – that I would never do anything for Prabhupada again. "I told you to clear everything with me before you tell anyone," he said. I didn't think I was negligent but I was powerless to fight the issue and was relieved of my service to Srila Prabhupada. After a long lamentation in my room Upendra came in and said, "They couldn't find a replacement so you are going to get another chance." So I returned to helping serve Srila Prabhupada. Two days later Prabhupada said, "I'm ready to announce the ritvik acharyas." Tamala Krishna Goswami sat in dictation as Srila Prabhupada sat on the Vyasasana with closed eyes and started naming them off – Kirtanananda, Hridayananda... pausing seconds between each name. After saying ten names Prabhupada paused longer than before and Tamala asked is that all Srila Prabhupada?" "Yes," he replied. Tamala seemed disturbed. Then Prabhupada peeked out at Tamala, looked at me and smiled, saying, "Oh, and you." Tamala gave a sigh of relief and hurried of with the big news. Then every morning Tamala had questions for Prabhupada about the guru issue. One of the first questions was, "Srila Prabhupada, should we put Vyasasanas in the temple rooms?" Prabhupada said, "No! That would create enmity among my disciples – you can make a separate room for that."

Then Tamala asked, "What if a ritvik acharya falls down?" "The GBC can remove, "Prabhupada replied. "Can the GBC elect more ritviks?" Tamala asked. "Yes every year in Mayapura, they can elect," said Prabhupada.

Comments, Nityananda dasa, Ed:

These recollections were first detailed in VVR 10 and they are restated here again as a refresher for those who missed the letter that started the ritvik debates last Christmas.

From Rathayatra dasa, San Francisco, CA, 6.12.90:

As a very conditioned soul in the material world, I'm very unqualified to challenge the GBC or senior devotees, but in my heart, I feel scared about our ISKCON, especially after what the *gurus* did to us and the movement in the late 70's and 80's. (Saw Bhaktipada on Larry King last week, and I shall never forget the look in his eyes.) I just wanted you to know that the VVR gave me a good sense of hope with your excellent analysis and to keep it up.

From Albert Rason, Brooklyn, NY, 5.9.90:

I would like to keep at least one copy of each VVR issue for reference. Of course Srila Prabhupada's books are the standard texts for proper understanding, and reference for defeating *mayavadis* and atheists. The VVR is the perfect supplement for proper understanding of the current issues plaguing our society. Because it's written by devotees for devotees, it has the correct philosophical and spiritual foundation for defeating present day speculators which we encounter so often. Thank you for your service to Srila Prabhupada and to the Vaishnava devotees.

From Janajanmadih dasa, 5.25.90:

Enclosed are the petition forms which I signed agreeing only in part. I believe the best course for ISKCON is to accept the *ritvik* system. However, that does not mean that I believe ISKCON is the only Vaishnava organization or the only source of bona fide initiation. I do believe it is best for ISKCON to promote the ritvik system temporarily. Here is a question that you do not seem to want to answer: Why didn't Srila Bhaktisiddhanta point out Srila Prabhupada as the next *acharya*?

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

A *ritvik* system is certain to lose its validity sooner or later. However, recognition of the pre-eminent position of Srila Prabhupada, not just as Founder Acharya, but as the prominent guru of all his followers for the next 10,000 years, must be preserved at all cost. As for Srila Bhaktisiddhanta indicating Srila Prabhupada as the next Acharya, he was under no obligation of any sort to do so. He had already indicated that Prabhupada would "do everything in his own time", which is probably as much recognition as he could possibly have given a "rotten *grihastha*" at the time. How many of Srila Prabhupada's *sannyasi* Godbrothers would have happily accepted him as the next Acharya of the institution they considered themselves the heirs to? They mostly tended to think themselves his natural superiors. Besides, Srila Prabhupada had a part to play in a wonderful transcendental drama. That he progressed from a voice in the wilderness to the head of a vast worldwide mission only increases his great glory.

From Dhruva Maharaja dasa, Mayapura, India, 5.21.90:

What's the news? Without my VVR, I'm floundering in the darkness of ignorance. Before the Mayapura Festival there were plenty of VVR's around, now I haven't seen one in months – not that I don't know why – but I certainly don't agree with the reasons. VVR is an excellent facility for communication among devotees. Here in Mayapura we got in real trouble passing them around to interested people. Anyway, I want a year's subscription and back issues from No. 12 on. Because VVR is so controversial around here, please send them in a plain envelope to my post office box! Living in Mayapura is much different from Vrndavana. We stay out at the Goshalla where it's quiet and peaceful. I'm working on a guide-book to Jagannatha Puri, and Sama Priya is making hand-made Krishna dolls. We hope to stay through next April, then return to the States. Like I said, we're really isolated from any kind of news, but that can be good if you get absorbed in Krishna or Lord Chaitanya.

From Bhakta Sergey Baranow, Moscow, USSR, 6.13.90:

So, I am very interesting [sic] after VVR and your community. I've read No.'s 8, 9 and 11. I'm glad to find very useful information and philosophical issues. Commonly, VVR here is rejected, but some devotees still read it. To find your Vedic River books is practically impossible here. Please help with devotional reply. I and my friends need this kind of reading. VVR #11 (guru issue) is translated into Russian.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

It is truly ironic that while Russia has opened up with glastnost, ISKCON in eastern Europe is still in the dark ages of repression. VVR's are now the only literature being confiscated in Russia!

From Basu Ghosh dasa, Chicago, IL, 8.6.90:

Could I make a humble request/suggestion? It would be nice of you, as the publisher of *Ray of Vishnu*, *Seventh Goswami*, and the above ordered books, to send a complimentary copy of them to H.H. Puri Maharaja and H.H. Narayana Maharaja in view of their scholarly qualifications, favorable attitude to Srila Prabhupada and the fact that they are senior *sannyasis* on the planet.

Comment, Nityananda dasa, Ed:

Copies of each book were sent with Basu Ghosh Prabhu back to India for presentation to each of the above mentioned Vaishnavas.

From Priya Bhakta dasa, Montreal, Canada, 8.6.90:

Thank you very much for your latest magazine; it is well appreciated. Keep up your great work, we need you! I have read 3 of your books, namely *Seventh Goswami*, *Ray of Vishnu* and *Katha and Kena Upanishads*. I have found them very scholarly and devotional. Being a translator, I sometimes wonder if you would be interested in publishing them in French.

From Yudhishthira dasa, Dallas, to Janardana dasa, 5.18.90:

I am enclosing the latest "guru-tattva" paper from the GBC which should help your understanding. Also I thought we had

mailed you the *ISKCON Journal*. If not, please try to get a copy, and if you cannot locate one, let me know. It will really satisfy you if you need ammunition to deal with some of the remarks which you have been hearing. However, I should add a caution that to hear blasphemy and stay and listen is very dangerous. Please be careful.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

Actually we are getting tired of watching for the "latest" version of *guru-tattva* from the GBC. Their tattva keeps changing; no wonder it's hard to understand. Let's get back to reality, back to RITVIK.

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

We intend to make a full and detailed evaluation of the various "position papers" or "current theories" put out by the GBC over the years on the *guru* question in a future issue of VVR. While we have no desire to deprecate the work of the GBC merely for the sake of controversy, it must be recognised that their interpretation of *guru-tattva* has been in constant flux, having mutated practically on a yearly basis, a phenomena never before seen in the Vaishnava *sampradayas*. A *tattva* that constantly needs revision is clearly no *tattva* at all. It therefore seems imperative to us that the GBC finally comes to grips with the issue, revokes and disclaims any papers that were *apasiddhantic* (contrary to Vaishnava *siddhanta*) and gets to the root of the problems that have plagued this Hare Krishna movement since Srila Prabhupada's disappearance. There are simply too many unanswered questions with respect to Srila Prabhupada's final instructions for the continuation of the *sampradaya* and the GBC seems determined to avoid such questions at all costs. Such questions as, "Where are the recordings of Srila Prabhupada naming the two individuals as *ritviks* that are not named in the July 8th conversation", "Did Srila Prabhupada add a codicil to his Will, and if so what change was made?", "Why did Srila Prabhupada talk of naming *ritviks* on the 28th of May 1977 and then wait two months to do so?", etc.

From Harikesha Swami,
GBC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 6,15,90:

Dear Nityananda dasa/Karnamrita dasa, Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. I am writing to you as the GBC secretary for the year. The executive committee had a meeting on the 6th of July, and we discussed your present situation. Bhakta Rupa Prabhu received one letter from Rupa Vilasa dasa, but we do not consider that this letter in any way fulfilled the conditions set by the GBC. Since Rupa Vilasa has seemingly left you in the meantime, I am writing to you to inform you that your deadline is drawing closer, and that you should act soon to fulfill the conditions of the GBC if you intend on doing it at all.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:

Sorry, Maharaja, but neither I nor Karnamrita Prabhu will be able to fulfill your "terms of rehabilitation." I for one will not be intimidated in this way to give up my view that Srila Prabhupada is desirous of and capable of accepting disciples even today. Srila Prabhupada is not "posthumous", he is "living still in sound." Why do you GBC insist that Srila Prabhupada is not directly accessible to the devotees? This is the real injustice in this affair: that the GBC has erroneously propagated the notion that Srila Prabhupada is dead and that he cannot be known, worshipped or served directly.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

I sincerely hope, Maharaja, that in the light of it transpiring that several prominent GBC men have given *ritvik* initiations (Tamala Krishna Maharaja and Gopala Krishna Maharaja), the GBC will have the courage and humility to reconsider the whole question of *in-absentia* initiation. The issue has certainly become a highly emotional one, and the GBC has not really dealt with it on a philosophical basis. They have taken our challenge, which was essentially a philosophical one, as a personal attack, and have responded in anger. Clearly, *ritvik* initiations are not as far-fetched, or evil, as the official GBC organs would have us believe. We therefore humbly request a retrial.

From Krishnanandini dasi, Cleveland OH, August 1990:

Enclosed please find my check for $8 for one year's subscription to VVR. Though you are indeed "controversial" and I do not agree with every single point, still, I very much appreciate your sincerity and dedication to our beloved Srila Prabhupada.

From Charles Fidler, Owosso, MI:

I am not an initiated disciple of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, but I had the extremely good fortune of driving a disciple of his and his wife to a morning class in the Berkeley temple in 1974. It was the year that was the last Rathayatra in Golden Gate Park that Prabhupada attended. I also helped pull the cart he was riding on, and I chanted for four hours in front of the stage where he was sitting. A really hot kirtan. The rest of the festival I helped sell Brijbasi pictures to the crowd. I cling to these memories like a raft in this ocean of materialism. All glories to the pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada.

From Parampadam dasa, Wisconsin, 7.31.90:

I was very pleased to receive volume #13 of the VVR and wish to keep it coming. It's always disheartening to hear of the difficulties our Godbrothers are experiencing, especially so to hear the news in issue 13 regarding such important issues as this *ritvik* dilemma; still unresolved. Let me pray to Mother Sarasvati that all those, in and out of "ISKCON", "GBC", etc., see the truth, and discover what Srila Prabhupada intended for us so we can all cooperate as he so wishes us to do. *Yasya prasadad bhagavat prasado.*

From Anna Sherman, Golden, CO, 7.20.90:

Enclosed is a check for $15 to renew my subscription for eight issues. Although I appreciate your efforts to place Srila Prabhupada at the center of ISKCON, I would like to see more information in VVR on: establishing and maintaining a Krishna conscious business or marriage, and New Jaipur community issues in general. (How about an article about your *gurukula* program?)

From Maureen Braithwaite, New York, NY, 7.25.90:

Please place my name on your mailing list. I am unable to work. Would you please send me, if possible, a free trial subscription to *Vedic Village* magazine. I love Lord Krishna.

From Anonymous, Houston, TX, 7.20.90:

I am happy to see the open forum discussion that is presented by VVR. While reading issues 5-12 and today, #13, I have been trying to understand more about Srila Prabhupada's wishes for ISKCON and the truth of the guru issue. I asked Dhanavira dasa Vanachari about his realizations several months back, (I was looking for philosophical answers) and the following is a paraphrase. He said that VVR was not a very good platform for discussion because only one side is presented. Devotees who are active in such discussions are not engaged in preaching activities. A few days later it was mentioned that it is not Prabhupada's example to put our dirty laundry in public. Surely he is very active in preaching, but I have seen that New Jaipur has a yogurt shop (*prasadam* distribution), a museum in Natchez for preaching, and important books are written in New Jaipur.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

If, in order to preach and make new devotees, one simply had to don saffron cloth and travel, then why was Srila Prabhupada so interested in establishing farm communities? And why, for that matter, did he disband the Radha-Damodara Bus Program? The Prabhu's suggestion that we are not engaged in "preaching activities", with all due respect, indicates that he has a rather narrow, stereotyped idea of preaching. Any activity that inspires others to take up devotional service, or inspires devotees in their devotional service, is preaching. I think we have had some slight success in this respect – there is nothing intrinsically wrong with primarily preaching to devotees. Why does he think there is? Moreover, we *have* distributed and published many thousands of books of transcendental knowledge, and have made some attempt to popularize Varnashram, an institution much desired by Srila Prabhupada and his predecessors.

Actually, the devotees here are as enthusiastic to preach as any I have ever known. Thus I have the good fortune of associating with some great souls.

From Ananta Vijaya dasa, Abeokuta, Nigeria:

By some good fortune I have managed to get a hold of a copy of your VVR – from a Godbrother – which I find dynamic. I will be happy if you send all the issues of VVR and also a pamphlet on Guru-deputy acharya. Thus I am a *brahmachari* without even a single naira or kobo, but I have desire not to be a blind follower but find out the truth and live with the truth – which is sadhu, sastra and guru. Please, if you can help me to save Srila Prabhupada's mission in this part of the world, I will be grateful – your assistance is needed badly. Your letter should be well sealed up and covered up so that my godbrothers will not seize and destroy them. I have intense desire to set up Varnashram Vaishnava Society, but I am inexperienced. I need your guidance and assistance also.

From Sarasvati dasi, Pennsylvania, 7.21.90:

It has become obvious to me that you are not actually interested in submissive inquiry but are entangled in a pursuit of argument merely for subtle sense gratification. I hope some day you will stop fault-finding long enough to see that the "ISKCON Journal" shows Srila Prabhupada's evidence in support of ISKCON and the GBC very clearly. Both are Srila Prabhupada's body and representative. Both are dynamic and willing to correct themselves by taking the humble position before Srila Prabhupada's very clear desire: Be humble, work together toward the single goal – Lord Chaitanya's movement in pure disciplic succession in every town and village. Quarreling is Kali's movement. I pray that you drop your eagerness to fault-find – it is a very bad example for new devotees. I hope you are not acting mainly out of a basic desire to be independent. It is a terrible injustice and spiritual offense to mislead people in spiritual life.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

It is lamentable that innocent devotees such as yourself feel constrained to give so much credence to a journal that contains concocted interviews, the testimony of persons of extremely doubtful character, slander, vituperative attack, and suchlike. Not only was the tone of this journal unphilosophical in the extreme, but it promoted dangerous ideas injurious to new devotees that we thought long-dead, such as the idea that Srila Prabhupada appointed gurus to succeed him in May of 1977!! I can only assume, Mataji, that you have not had the opportunity to examine our reply to the Executive Committee's broadside. I humbly request you to do so. Perhaps you would also care to consider what it feels like to have one's Godbrothers *publicly* petition Lord Nrisimhadeva to destroy one! Is that a good example to offer to new devotees?

I wish to assure you that VVR, with all its admitted blemishes, was never published with a desire to simply find fault, that we have had to make considerable sacrifices in order to bring our concerns to the attention of our Godbrothers and sisters, and that it was done with the hope that ISKCON might not perish like the Gaudiya Matha and for no other reason. We do not wish to work separately from the institution founded by our spiritual master. On the other hand, if the only means by which we can promote Srila Prabhupada as the predominant spiritual master for every member of this movement, for as long as it endures, is to risk being pilloried, "excommunicated", cursed, or what have you, then so be it. A disciple must be willing to suffer for his spiritual master.

We agree that it is a terrible offence to mislead people in spiritual life. We think the GBC, wittingly or unwittingly, have grievously mislead the movement and its members since the Summer of 1977 with respect to the *guru* issue. If that is not so, then why does ISKCON appear to so many devotees to be withering like a dying branch?

From Andrew Rawlinson, Lancaster University, England, Department of Religious Studies, 5.26.90:

I am doing some research on ISKCON and have recently been told about a disagreement between yourselves and other devotees concerning Srila Prabhupada's instructions for initiation after his death. I have a copy of *ISKCON Journal*, Vol.1, No.1, which answers the position taken in the *Vedic Village Review*, but I have not seen your original argument. It would help me if you could send me a copy so that I can evaluate the matter as objectively as possible. It would also help me if you give some background to this dispute (though maybe this is furnished in your publication).

Editors' comment: VVR copies were sent as requested.

From Parasurama dasa, Dublin, Ireland, 6.26.90:

I did not receive a reply to my last letter, but I'm sure my temple president took it, as shortly after, I got kicked out with my friends. But our Padayatra is going very well, and nobody can argue with success. We have a very nice Padayatra team, together over twenty devotees, most of whom had a heavy time from their GBC, and thus we have come together to get on with Srila Prabhupada's mission. The response has been better than that in India, people have been very good to us. Also the monks and priests have given us accommodation in their monasteries. We have just walked from Belfast to Dublin and are now heading south along the coast. This program is working without any support (money or men) from the ISKCON temples in Ireland. Simply relying on Krishna! We are still fighting to get one particular GBC out of the country. They are very slow and are in the process of exposing themselves. I received the *ISKCON Journal*, and to me it was a load of arrogant rubbish, except Satsvarupa Maharaja's article, but they were trying to use him.

From Jagajjivana dasa, Lafayette, CA:

The seeming overloudness of VVR #11 and #12 may have been inevitable; it is rather hard to shoot off a canon a little bit at a time. Following those opening salvos, VVR #13 has a quiet strength. And as before, in the Letters, our fellow so-called rank-and-file devotees seem engladdened by the hope of working together again, just for Srila Prabhupada.

From Dhanishtha dasi, Illinois:

I appreciate my letters being printed, for it makes me feel very connected again to Greater ISKCON. The philosophical input I have received through VVR has awakened my heart again. Since receiving these VVR quarterlies (as well as Kelilalita's "Daily Devotions and Meditations", thanks, prabhu!) my life has transformed, by Srila Prabhupada's causeless mercy. Early this year, I began to chant sporadically (after 7 years of foolish not chanting!) ... Now I have come to chant full 16 rounds again, every day, and read *Srimad Bhagavatam* regularly – daily. I have 2 Tulasi that I planted from seed, they are now six months old and doing nicely with simple flower and water offerings, obeisances and circumambulation. The leaves and manjari buds of these most kind Tulasi Devis are offered to my Deities, Gaura-Nitai and Nrisimhadeva. My Srila Prabhupada deity gets one in his hand to offer to Krishna. My *japa*, during *Brahma-muhurta* hour, is ecstatic with these deities. People I know from all walks of life out here are starting to give flowers for my deities from their blooming gardens. Some of these souls are becoming vegetarian, inquiring submissively, and loving prasadam! I am a fallen fool, there was no hope for me, before I began to chant and follow the four principles strictly again. But, some how or other, Srila Prabhupada has again picked me up from miscreant behavior and decadence. Thank you, most sincere disciples of Srila Prabhupada. The greatest gift has been given to me again ... a chance to serve His Divine Grace. I pray to increase my service by spreading this movement purely and only guided by the instructions of those who follow Srila Prabhupada strictly and Srila Prabhupada's divine instructions (via his books, lectures, etc.) themselves. PS. The KM tonic is extremely potent and helpful in my daily energy needs.

From Dr. Arvin K. Singh, Clarks Summit, PA, 4.19,90:

Recently we read several back issues of VVR, in which you have raised several important issues regarding the Zonal *Guru* System which was instituted by the ISKCON after the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada (and which has been discontinued about 4 years ago). We want to confine ourselves to the specific issue of the Zonal Acharya System. It appears to us that you have reached the conclusion that this zonal guru system was harmful and damaging to the growth of Srila Prabhupada's mission for spreading Krishna Consciousness. May be that in some parts of the world this system malfunctioned and did not live up to expectations. However, we want to present the opposing view that at least in our own lives this system was very beneficial and a godsend.

Our lives have changed for the better in the last 10 years. We still continue to be busy with our material life, but beyond that since our initiation, both of us have very carefully followed the four regulative principles and have chanted our prescribed rounds of *japa* every day. In addition to the above, Lord Krishna has provided us time to participate in the preaching mission of Srila Prabhupada, under the strict guidance of our spiritual master. We have regular Krishna conscious programs at our home which are attended by 60-70 people each time. We have started unique "Adopt a Cow" program at Gita Nagari Dhama since 1986 in accordance of instructions and desires of Srila Prabhupada. This cow protection program is being extended all over the world through the agency of "International Society for Cow Protection". We have helped the devotees in our zone within all our means in their mission of spreading Srila Prabhupada's mission. We can safely say that last 10 years have been very fruitful and blessed period of our lives.

Please publish this letter in VVR so that a different perspective of zonal guru system can be presented to the ISKCON community.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

The Zonal Acharya System was *never* prescribed by Srila Prabhupada nor by anyone else in our disciplic succession. It made a mockery of the philosophy of the Vaishnava Acharyas, especially that of Srila Jiva Goswami, by imposing the acceptance of spiritual guides upon prospective initiates according to the limited, temporary, material region in which they resided, and in South and Western Europe, West Coast USA, Australia, and West Virginia, and in many other regions, it resulted in an enormous exodus of devotees from the movement, in practically empty temples, in the closure of a number of vital temples, and in disenchantment and loss of faith for many good, but perhaps unresilient souls. Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON received appalling notice in the world's press as a result of murders, fraud and suchlike – all as a result of resting too much power, both spiritual and temporal, upon a few immature devotees who became absolutely corrupted thereby. Just recall the late Jayatirtha dasa pulling his followers from ISKCON temples in England and elsewhere and introducing them to chemically induced "ecstasy" and other unsavory habits. Most did not return to the fold. Recall the propagating of beach-bum-*bhava* in the Antipodes by a flamboyant, homosexual "guru". Recall expulsions from temples, beatings, and even "terminations" stemming from criticism of this system and its figureheads. You have managed to stay afloat through all this, or perhaps, blissfully unaware of it. I

would suggest that you have done so *despite* the Zonal Acharya System rather than because of it.

From Raghupati dasa Adhikari, Essex, England:

I have just read my first issue of VVR (No. 12). I certainly found the contents interesting. Whether Srila Prabhupada wanted the original eleven gurus to succeed him is a matter for debate. Some of the "evidence" presented in your magazine seems to suggest that he didn't, which is a little less clear. Whatever the outcome, I think it is wrong to say that all of the current gurus should stand down.

I am a disciple of Krishna dasa Swami, and the more I spend time with him, the more I am convinced that he is a pure devotee. Before taking initiation, I read and re-read Srila Prabhupada's descriptions of an *uttama- adhikari*, and I could see that Krishna dasa Maharaja was the personification of those descriptions. If you spent some time in his presence, I am sure that you would feel the same. To show that I am not biased towards my own spiritual master, I would remind you of Gaura Govinda Swami, another great devotee. In fact, I heard that Srila Prabhupada once described him as a pure devotee. So, there are some great souls in our movement. they may not be as thick on the ground as we have been led to believe, but they are there. As I said I enjoyed reading VVR and look forward to the next issue. I'm shocked and sorry that IWR will not carry your ad.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:

We have been led to believe by the GBC that Srila Prabhupada appointed successor acharyas, that the eleven were pure devotees, that gurus can be made by votes, that an undefined *madhyama* can be a *guru*, that Srila Prabhupada is no longer directly accessible to today's *bhaktas*, and much more. The so-called research work done by or for the GBC to date is incomplete and questionable, being politically tainted. Devotees all over the world have substantial doubts about the present ISKCON guru system and the integrity of the GBC. VVR has become a voice for those devotees. Unfortunately, many devotees are not as convinced about things as you claim to be.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

I know His Holiness Krishnadasa Swami quite well. He is a gentleman to be sure—a stalwart *siksha* disciple of Srila Prabhupada. With the greatest of respect, you would do well to ask him whether he is an *uttama-adhikari* or not before coming to a final conclusion. "...of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth." [Bg. 7.3] I'm sure he wouldn't want you to be in any illusion in that regard.

From Vijnana dasa, Athens, Greece, 5.13.90:

I may inform you that I never had a subscription to your magazine, and I never want to have such a subscription. Also, as temple president of the Athens temple, I would be very grateful if you would kindly refrain from sending any letters here. We do not want anything to do with your magazine or your philosophy. We are faithful followers of Srila Prabhupada and his representatives, the GBC. P.S. I still owe you $35 for the two books you sent me. Please excuse me for taking so long to send it.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

Please pay your bill for the books. It has been 10 months now.

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

As long as the GBC faithfully represent Srila Prabhupada's teachings then they are without a doubt his representatives, *as are we all*. This philosophy, that no one comes to Srila Prabhupada except through the GBC, is one of the contaminations of the Zonal Acharya era. Srila Prabhupada told Vasudeva Prabhu that if he were unable to accept the authority of the GBC, and he could understand that he might be, then he could approach Srila Prabhupada directly.

To have doubts in the authority or ability of the GBC is quite natural for any devotee who is able to form his own opinions and as such was not necessarily condemned By Srila Prabhupada. We would never question the authority of a GBC that strictly conformed to Srila Prabhupada's teachings and acknowledge the general principle that one should submit oneself to the authority of the GBC. Your implying that we are unfaithful to Srila Prabhupada is rather uncharitable.

From Madhavi devi dasi, 5.23.90:

The Prabhupada Bhajana tapes mean so much to me. More nectar! I just didn't care to listen to other *bhajana* tapes—who knows who on the tapes have fallen. I know when I listen to Prabhupada I'm listening to a pure devotee *jagad guru*. Now I have sent for first set of 42 lecture tapes. I plan to get all 711 of them. I can only imagine the wonderful nectar I'll receive from them.

From Madhavi devi dasi, 8.20.90

I wrote a letter yesterday asking forgiveness for ever doubting Srila Bhaktipada. I was caught up with all the talks of Ritvik etc. I went crazy for a while and doubted Srila Bhaktipada as a pure devotee, spiritual master. He has never spoken a word that could be in any way taken not from the acharyas that were previous to him. He's made a few changes—but so did Srila Prabhupada and His Spiritual Master. Srila Prabhupada's God brothers were against him too. I know that Srila Bhaktipada is the one Guru that has arisen from the ranks of Srila Prabhupada's disciples. Everyone else would know it too if they didn't let a few changes to spiritually blind them. He is the acharya Spiritual Master. He adheres strictly, as do his disciples, to Srila Prabhupada's teachings and regulative principles.

Comments, Nityananda dasa:

You changed your mind twice already; I wouldn't be too sure yet. Take your time and be sure to follow your own advice from May.

From Visva Guru dasa, New Mayapura, France, 5.2.90:

Because, as you may know, after the GBC resolutions, VVR is forbidden to be distributed in ISKCON temples. So, living in New Mayapura, it is now not possible for me to distribute the coming issues. If it's possible, don't put VVR print on the package's outside.

From Suhotra Swami:

Don't say I'm not fair minded! Gauri Dasa tells me he's sent my correspondence with him since *ISKCON Journal* to you. I

suppose you'll want to print it, complete with cheesey editorial comments!

But wait! Here's Gauri's Retorts To My Snorts At Ritvikvada!

Now you get the complete picture, no? Harbor no ill feeling toward me – I have yet assisted you in your quest for truth, justice and the American Way (of deviations from the *sampradaya*). I am so liberal minded that I can readily appreciate the good points of my opponent's views – like his P.S and the end of his April 30 letter which praises the Euro Sankirtana devotees. Can you clear up one mystery? Why is it that the European *sankirtana* devotees don't read VVR (they think it's *maya*), don't subscribe to Ritvikvada (they worship their Prabhupada's-disciple-*gurus* as authorized representatives of the *Paramapara*), and don't like tuning into the political hubbub of the "Greater ISKCON" grapevine – and yet they're so fired up! Could there actually be a cause and effect connection?

Bottom line: You guys are washed up around here!

Comments, Nityananda dasa, Ed;

I included this excerpt mainly for humor. But take note, VVR is the most widely read Vaishnava periodical in ISKCON. Why? Because too many devotees are tired of tuning into the old hackneyed GBC propaganda, and are interested in hearing more than one viewpoint. They may agree with VVR or the GBC, or neither, but this process of debate, whether verbal, written or mental, is strengthening to the intelligence. We come to better understand the philosophy of Krishna consciousness. Thus, I would surmise that VVR is an aid to advancement in Krishna consciousness.

From Parvati devi dasi, Cleveland OH, 5.4.90:

Due to your mercy, my devotional creeper has been tremendously increased. I am eager to rise early in the morning and relish the sound of Krishna. My dining room has been converted into a temple room, and my living room into a reception room, featuring Krishna's most precious pastimes. In addition, I have converted my children's rooms into gurukula classrooms. Krishna is so kind! We are surrounded by a loving energy of transcendental pictures and experience our beloved Prabhupada's transcendental tapes. Hare Krishna! What a life! By your mercy, everything in Krishna has increased, and Krishna is certainly pleased with your service.

From Surgriva dasa, Nava Jiyada Nrisingha Kshetra, Germany, 4.17.90:

Thank you very much for sending your magazine. But, please, do not send it any more! We Nrisingha-kshetra-vasis don't like your GBC challenge. We want to surrender to and cooperate with the GBC. We don't want to force the GBC to cooperate with us. So, we have to accept our authority. Simple thing. No worry. Krishna is there! Hoping the best that you can surrender too.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

Cooperation means more than just blind following. Furthermore, our surrender is to Srila Prabhupada first, and to cooperate with those who are representing Srila Prabhupada's teachings. There is ample and justifiable concern whether or not Srila Prabhupada's teachings are being represented accurately, especially in regards to the *guru* issue. Who is a bonafide *guru*? What are the qualifications? How did Prabhupada want initiations to go on after his physical departure? Is Prabhupada still available for initiation through *ritviks* today? There will always be those devotees who are not inclined to question the established order, but would rather get on with their service. Then again, there are those who want to establish things as they should be, thinking this to be their highest duty.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

Since Srila Prabhupada was all-intelligent, his use of the English language was very precise and meaningful. Thus, in order to properly comprehend what he meant by his instruction that we should cooperate, it is worth considering the dictionary definition of the word "cooperate": "...work together (*with* a person *in* a work, *to* an end); concur in producing an effect..." [*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Italics as in original.] Working *with* the GBC implies mutual respect and an absence of "lording over"; there is, after all, an obvious difference between working *with* and working *for*. Concurring in producing an effect (transmitting the teachings of Lord Chaitanya in this instance) implies frank and open discussion of points of contention and an absence of coercion and dogmatism.

Notwithstanding the fact that, as Vaishnavas, we generally wish to relate to each other with humble appreciation for each others' devotion and service to Guru and Gauranga, you are stretching the English language beyond the limits of credibility by equating "surrender" with "cooperation".

From Nityananda dasa, New Jaipur, to Sivarama Swami, 6.18.90:

I have received two reports from England that you have made it a policy that the BBT there cannot supply any of Srila Prabhupada's books to anyone who is working outside the GBC approved temples. We at Vedic River have been approached by devotees in England who are unable to obtain the thousands of pieces of literature they need for their distribution. Of course, we can supply them from America, but it seems that it would be more practical to supply them from your side of the ocean.

Could you please advise me whether it is true that you have a restrictive policy regarding who may distribute Srila Prabhupada's books, be they devotee or non-devotee? (Note: no reply yet!)

From Brahma Sampradaya dasi, Virginia, 8.19.90:

There is no more bitter medicine than being denied Prabhupada's shelter. Prabhupada is the transparent medium of Krishna teaching pure, sublime love of Godhead. Prabhupada is the bona fide guru, pure devotee, and he is unlimited. He is not "almost unlimited". (Prabhupada Nectar Vol. 3 page 22). New Jaipur devotees are reestablishing the faith that Prabhupada originally gave to me. Some are surprised that VVR is bold. I say RELIEF! "Overzealous, short on tact, harsh and dogmatic." I say reserved and scholarly. The journal is another repeat of 13 years of word jugglery and I have heard it all a million times. The word jugglery minimizes Prabhupada; calling him posthumous or dead. Prabhupada is helping you and giving you spiritual strength. You are taking on all the ISKCON hierarchy. The San Diego debate was clearly meant to establish Prabhupada as "posthumous". Go on trying to help ISKCON,

they are thinking they should help you; that is the propaganda. Thank you for the explanation of IWR's "apology" for fair, neutral coverage of San Diego debate. My condolences to Mukunda Maharaja.

From Nityananda dasa, Seattle, WA, 8.15.90:

Thanks sincerely for your concern for Seattle. On behalf of the devotees here, I would like to point out that: 1) Krishna consciousness never needed to be revived here at Seattle (at least in terms of Prabhupada's temple), but has been going on, struggling sometimes, but we've never died. We have been maintaining regular *harinams* and preaching in the city and have increased our congregation. 2) We're only about 25 or 30 minutes drive from downtown or the university area. Things aren't all that bad here. By Prabhupada's mercy we just had a very successful Janmashtami celebration and are looking forward to our biggest Ratha Yatra festival yet, in the city in Volunteer Park, where Srila Prabhupada used to like to take his morning walks. I appreciate the sincerity of the devotees at New Jaipur. I do wish, however, that you would print more nectar, i.e. translations from some of Bhaktivinoda's books or whatever. I think that there is too much politics all over and not enough Krishna consciousness.

From Jagajjivana dasa, Lafayette, CA, 8.13.90:

Both Upendra and Pradyumna have stated, with outrage, that the editor of the so-called *ISKCON Journal* did not interview them – ever. Both do in fact remember Gauridasa's intimate service to Srila Prabhupada; the nay-saying "interviews" were utter fabrications. Hopefully Gauridasa will get Upendra and Pradyumna Prabhus to write at least brief letters to the VVR. When Ravindra's tactical cheating becomes exposed, so will his philosophical cheating, the whole ruse about "maintaining the *sampradaya*" with contaminated so-called *gurus*.

From Sajjanasraya dasa, New South Wales, Australia, 8.13.90:

I am writing to you to find out whether you are still continuing to publish the VVR. As you may be aware, I did send US $24 for my two year subscription. Here in Australia, we are somewhat isolated from the rest of this planet, and we are not up to date with all of the events occurring, especially in the US.

Comment, Nityananda dasa, Ed:

Yes, VVR lives. Neither the GBC excommunication nor the departure of Rupa Vilasa Prabhu has caused VVR to cease its effort to reform Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON according to his own teachings. Our astrologer has advised also: VVR will carry on and join in the ultimate success of placing Prabhupada back in the center of ISKCON.

From Madana Mohana dasa, Middlesex, England, 7.20.90:

I must congratulate you on your publishing work, like "Lives of Vaishnava Acharyas". It is an indispensable necessity to know and love the preceptors in our disciplic succession, and you have done a great deal to fulfill such a need. Reading an old copy of VVR, I took note that you intended to publish some other works such as "Prema Vivarta" of Srila Jagadananda Prabhu, and the complete songs of Thakura Bhaktivinoda. His "Saranagati" and "Gitavali" are already available but not very widely, but the "Kalyana Kalpataru", and "Gitamala" have not, as far as I know, been made available to the English knowing devotees or the people in general. You may or may not know that your journal VVR is banned and forbidden at the Bhaktivedanta Manor. If you would be so kind as to let me have information regarding the above mentioned works, I will be much obliged to you. (Editors: Yes, Bhaktivinoda's Songbooks are coming out from New Jaipur Press shortly.)

From Muralivadana dasa, Santa Cruz, CA, 8.19.90:

I have enjoyed your magazine since its inception. I wish I were smart or pure enough to join in the philosophical discussions. Since I am not, it is nice to hear devotees struggling to push forward the frontiers of scholarship. Sometimes the tone becomes a bit nit-picking and legalistic, but I suppose that is a good antidote for blind faith. When I joined Srila Prabhupada's movement in 1970, I was hopeful, but highly skeptical, and remained skeptical for years. Prabhupada, with his scholarship, love and common sense eventually blew large holes in my atheistic programming. Had I been straightforward or brave enough to air my doubts to Prabhupada, I might have learned sooner, but back in the 70's it seems that blind faith was the rule, and most disciples considered it unthinkable to question him. On more than one occasion, however, I observed that Prabhupada actually liked talking to devotees who were honest and fearless enough to express their doubts. Prabhupada seemed to become stimulated by sincere questions, as for example, the questions Svarupa Damodara Maharaja asked him on a series of Venice Beach Morning Walks. Thus, even though VVR has made a lot of devotees uncomfortable in its vigorous search for the Truth, I am convinced that Prabhupada has directly inspired your endeavor. How else could it have so much potency? On the other hand, Prabhupada knew that the vast majority of his disciples were "third class" devotees, and I heard him say so on at least one occasion. But still he did not abandon us or cast us away.

Prabhupada was extremely tolerant and merciful. I distinctly noticed this on one morning walk. There were only four of us that morning: Prabhupada, his servant, his secretary, and myself. Prabhupada's servant and secretary kept up a running series of mundane jokes while walking two steps behind him. I became agitated witnessing this, but Prabhupada remained unperturbed, deep in his meditation. Later I realized that Prabhupada knew they were in the process of falling down and had given them his intimate association as a last chance to become serious. They both left the movement shortly after that, but Prabhupada had extended himself to the utmost to stay in spiritual contact. In fact, some time after this incident, this same servant told me that one day, when he was giving Prabhupada his massage, Prabhupada looked him directly in the eye and asked him, "Do you have any doubts?" Of course he did, and Prabhupada knew it. Unfortunately, this servant was not honest or fearless enough to state his doubts, thus he did not give Prabhupada a chance to refute them. He left the association of devotees shortly after this. So if the VVR is raising doubts, it may be painful, but it is a good thing, and will eventually allow more of Prabhupada's disciples to become reconciled. As disciples of Prabhupada, we should follow his example and not dismiss our God-brethren lightly. VVR is a stimulating, dynamic expression of deep spiritual faith and for your outspoken loyalty to Prabhupada, I love you dearly.

From Damian Prestbury, Manchester, England:

Recently I have been experiencing doubts about ISKCON and the GBC. ISKCON devotees told me that the doubts were my envious mentality, and Tamala Krishna Gosvami told me that I was applying material concepts to the devotees, which was offensive. I asked him the question: Before we came to the movement, we were surrounded by Kali-yuga, and there were so many corrupt organizations. And naturally, I sometimes doubt about the authenticity of the GBC. Does Krishna understand this? He replied, "No. It says in (he quoted from sastra) it's offensive to apply material concepts to devotees." Because of his high position, I felt a strange pressure, and it kept me from revealing my mind to other more experienced devotees than me. I felt this answer to be wrong. Would Krishna understand our doubts? If a person comes up to you on the street and says, "Why should I donate and take a book? I don't know where my money is going," should I turn around and blast him if I know the money is being used properly?

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

There are two questions raised here: 1) Is it offensive to doubt the competence of the GBC? 2) It is proper to level criticisms at the GBC?

When Arjuna expressed his doubts on the battlefield of Kurukshetra Krishna smiled and then carefully and compassionately dispelled them. He indirectly called Arjuna a fool, but neither chastised nor rejected him. Are we greater moralists than Krishna that we condemn those who have doubts? It seems that doubting is permissible—Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura stated that it is the duty of the spiritual master to *dispel* any doubts the disciple might have. He does not say the disciple should be rejected on account of his having doubts, rather, he puts the onus upon the *guru* to be sufficiently learned to be able to fulfill his obligation. Note also the nice letter from Muralivadana Prabhu above. Doubting is natural at the conditioned stage, and there is nothing to exempt the GBC from our skepticism or mistrust.

When did Srila Prabhupada say that we should never doubt our leadership? When his disciples in France petitioned him in 1975 to have Bhagavan dasa removed from the GBC he told Bhagavan: "If there is a complaint like this then it must be at least 50 percent true", and directed the GBC to remove him (the GBC, however, decided to keep him on). Prabhupada also took the criticisms of the Radha Damodara Bus Program seriously and disbanded it. He never said we should never criticize the GBC. Indeed, if we see the GBC is misleading or hampering the movement we *must* criticize!

From Ajamila dasa, England, 2.8.90, to Urdhvaga dasa:

You mentioned that I did not mention the successor hoax in my paper, and in this connection I agree with your assertions. You also mentioned that you want to see them publicly admit that they had appointed themselves, but I think that you fail to see that Krishna forced six of them to admit by way of His maya potency. Satsvarupa has admitted; Tamala Krishna has admitted, as I heard him in the Manor last year. So that leaves three: Jayapataka, Hridayananda and Harikesh Maharajas. There are only three you can really go for. Maybe they are repenting in their hearts, but I don't want to be the policeman to try and force them to do it publicly. Krishna took care of six who were reluctant, and it was only Krishna who could have done it. And I feel that it is only Krishna who can do anything for the other three one way or another. the last three each have thousands of disciples, and I don't want to pretend that I am as powerful as Krishna and that I can come in as the rod of chastisement. This one is up to Krishna.

So the real issue is to get on with Srila Prabhupada's mission and protect the purity by having a Guru Standards Committee which is really effective. That is the best thing. Srila Prabhupada's policy was always to rectify devotees but never to reject them. Leave that past issue up to Krishna for it is too big for any of us to attempt, although I agree that the three left should publicly admit their mistake for clarification to the assembled devotees, but you try and do it. We also have to be careful of our own devotional creepers if we want to develop offenseless chanting and obtain pure love for Krishna. Many have made this mistake, so we should be careful and depend on Krishna, who has already shown how He can, with one flick, remove someone from His movement. I have full faith in this.

From Urdhvaga dasa, 2.10.90, to Ajamila dasa:

Not long ago, I was told that I was free to leave the temple if I didn't accept the "gurus" that Prabhupada appointed. This was a low-class type of blackmail, I preferred to leave the temple. As a *bhakta*, I had been trained up with love, affection and devotion in a happy environment, free from politics, where devotional service was performed voluntarily and appreciated in a natural way. But there are still temples who control the devotees by fear, threats, blackmail, and politics instead of love, trust and devotion. This rather low-class type of temple management is an insult to any devotee's intelligence. That's why so many devotees left the temple. If I am not wanted in the temple but only those who accept the *guru* hoax, than I will certainly accept this as Krishna's mercy and live outside the temple. At least I know that I am not the only one. 95% of the Prabhupadites live outside the temple anyway, and I am glad to join them. I do not really need to belong to a 5% minority. The question is who is "in" and who is "out". I know that Krishna will take care of this issue, but I also know that Krishna acts through His devotees. The GBC should admit the Guru Hoax; that is all we need for clarification. It does not matter whether Jayapataka, Hridayananda or Harikesha admit anything or not, if only the GBC admits it. They are supposed to set the standard and lead the movement, not self-appointed super-gurus with a large number of followers. Why is the Guru Hoax still being preached today? You are quite right with your observation that the last three *gurus* have a large number of disciples (I would say hundreds rather than thousands) and that therefore it might be very difficult for them to admit their mistake. But I think this is even more a reason to do so. Otherwise, the matter could be: "If only the majority of devotees are caught up in a bogus guru system, than it cannot be challenged by a few who think otherwise". The truth is that the Guru Hoax has been maintained for 12 years up to date. I cannot see how you can solve the root cause of problems by the creation of a Guru Standards Committee. What is needed is humanity, love, trust and devotion among our leadership. A Guru Standards Committee (GSC) or a committee which monitors the standard of gurus, does not sound very encouraging to me. If you really create such a committee, which needs to control the standards of gurus, then you also admit the

sub-standards of our gurus. If our gurus are of sub-standards, then why should we have should we have such sub-standard gurus? Is it not better for such sub-standard gurus to renounce their guruship (as some have, in fact, done) and make Srila Prabhupada the guru? How will your GSC enforce its standards and control over the guru who is of sub-standard? What do you think Harikesha's disciples will tell you if you send your GSC to him to clarify the Guru Hoax? The fact is that we have been given great shows for the past 12 years without any significant change. The only change is that the problems concerning our ISKCON society have been shifted from a gross physical level to a more subtle level, which makes it even more difficult now. The proof is that such bogus philosophies are still being preached such as the "current link" philosophy or the philosophy that we cannot understand Srila Prabhupada's books by reading them, but that we need a current link who explains to us what Prabhupada really means to say. This is the height of the bogus ISKCON philosophy, and this is given to us now after 12 years of covered up guru hoax. Great – how long should this continue? We have been creating one committee after another, one guru after another, one legislation after another, and we can still observe in the ISKCON leadership the following: politics, hypocrisy, pride, arrogance, cheating, blackmail, and of course also love and devotion, but for their name, fame and glories (as current links). Or is it distinction and adoration? Isn't the GSC an excuse for covering up the sub-standards of our gurus? Where is the committee which reestablishes humility, love, trust, devotion and puts Srila Prabhupada (the perfect guru) in front of all other sub-standard gurus? Well, I know of such a committee. It is called New Jaipur, otherwise known as VVR or *Vedic Village Review*.

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

Ajamila Prabhu wants it both ways: Krishna will solve our problems and a Guru Standards Committee will solve our problems. This kind of confusion is not going to help. It is a fact that no GCS is necessary in the presence of a bona fide *guru*. The mere fact that we think such a committee necessary is an admission that we have unqualified men gambling that they can pull it off! And if they are not caught out, as some of the Gaudiya Matha men have not been, then they will continue to bluff until they die. Better we determine who the pretenders are and either put a stop to their nonsense or tell them to establish their own temples.

From Shyamasundara dasa, Andhra Pradesh, India, 5.9.90:

Hare Krishna! Victory to Srila Prabhupada! Hope this letter finds you in the peak of health and in the peak of Krishna consciousness. Recently I had the pleasure of meeting a very holy personage who has done Doctoral research based on astronomy on the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*--to fix up scientifically Lord Krishna's date of birth. He even worked out the horoscope of Lord Krishna – a boon to all Krishna lovers! He has also discovered a rare palm leaf manuscript of ancient *Bhagavad Gita* which contains 745 verses, including 45 verses lost for 2000 years from public view. He desires to shortly publish them from USA. He has lectured in our ISKCON temples in USA at the invitation of HH Sripadaji. It will be a rare privilege to meet Dr Vedavyasa, Ph.D., who is not only a profound Vedic scholar but also a scientist. He was also a friend of Srila Prabhupada's. Dr Vedavyasa will be shortly visiting USA in July, lecturing there through August 1990. I would be delighted if you can invite him for lectures on scientific dating of *Mahabharata* war and the 45 extra verses of the *Gita*. He is also a renowned astrologer who lectured at the U.N. in New York in 1985 and predicted that Communism would be vanquished in 1989. He expects a world cataclysm or a global *pralaya* in 1999 which marks the end of Kali Yuga sub-cycle in Kali yuga and it marks the beginning of a new age of truth (*satya yuga*). I am mailing to you a copy of his Yoga Brotherhood Newsletter. Kindly extend all the help you can for his efforts to build a University of Vedic Sciences in USA. I shall be glad for a word in reply.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

Naturally, we are extremely suspicious of 45 lost *Gita* verses, but so that the matter can be put to rest, we request our readers to submit their material on this matter. Speaking of astrology, Nischintya Prabhu predicted a major international confrontation in July, followed soon thereafter by the invasion of Kuwait. Another astrologer predicts mid-November as a likely time for the outbreak of war in the Middle East (Mars opposite the Sun). And of course, Nostradamus predicted the one with the blue turban would rise out of greater Mesopotamia (Saddam Hussein?) and strike terror into southern Europe up until about the year 2008. Chant Hare Krishna!

From Anonymous, England, 8.22.90:

Thank you for "Living Still in Sound". As Srila Prabhupada has said, "Books are the basis", so I do not see any reason of voting or filling in small bits of paper to satisfy the reasoning of today's "GBC". They have failed to come to the conclusion of *guru, sadhu* and *sastra* on the *guru tattva* issue. In fact, they have become the judge, jury and executioner, i.e. they are already proclaiming themselves as *guru, sastra* and *sadhu* – albeit without qualification! Our only hope for success is the words emanating from our spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada. His words "Books are the basis" will suffice in our efforts to reason with modern concoctions of guru. So please keep up the effort by producing many such proofs to install Srila Prabhupada to his true glory. He himself said: *nirvishesa-sunyavadi-paschatya-desa-tarine* (delivering the western countries)- that's his mission – not hypocrites who are incapable of delivering themselves! The only danger here in England is that if you speak aloud you do not have any guarantee that you can get Srila Prabhupada's books. So that's the only reason we have to keep a low profile. But since you have spoken out, note that we understand the feeling.

From Dr. L. Sardana, Bellaire, Texas, to ISKCON WORLD REVIEW:

Please print the following letter I sent to Kirtanananda Swami:

Sri Kirtanananda:

You expressed to your guru, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, that you would erect a befitting center for Krishna consciousness. This you did (we thank you) near Moundsville, W.VA. New Vrindavan was erected on the explicit as well as implicit declarations of Prabhupada's views and the propagation thereof. The public gave you money generously to build the project, and millions of dollars came from Krishna con-

scious devotees and sympathizers. Mr. Goyal of *Asia Today* reports that you have converted the Hindu-Sanatana temple into a quasi-Christian church. You are imprisoned to the above-named parameters. You cannot change New Vrindavan into a neo Christian center. You cannot take our money and then change the building according to your fancies. You are honor-bound to do only one thing—build according to Prabhupada's teachings. We could collectively sue you and get back the New Vrindavan project by proving that your present stance is a departure from Prabhupada. To say that "You are free to depart" is not impressive. You had to tell the potential donors in advance what the collections were to be used for. Please do not betray Prabhupada. We do not deny you freedom of choice or belief. You should just return New Vrindavan to Prabhupada and ISKCON. You owe your *guru* that. Thereafter, you are free to live and preach whatever hodge-podge concoction you want.

Comment, Nityananda dasa, Ed:

VVR supports the principle of legally suing Kirtanananda Swami for return of New Vrindaban to ISKCON and the purposes which Srila Prabhupada espoused. Dr Sardana has said it well. Those interested in pursuing the aim of returning New Vrindaban to Prabhupada may write to Aravinda dasa at the Gainesville ISKCON center.

Mr. W.M., Montreal, Canada, 8.20.90

This letter is to humbly appreciate your literary work, as well as your determination to bring about some important changes in our GBC. There is no doubt that our movement is still in great need of change, and few devotees, like yourselves, have somehow by the mercy of Krishna, taken part of the job upon your shoulders. This is indeed admirable. I prefer to remain anonymous, because if I disclose my identity now I would certainly be ostracized from even seeing my beloved Sri Sri Radha Manohara. This may sound like a Nazi treatment, but that's the way it is, at least for now. The temple here is struggling like anything. Temple devotees are over-endeavoring to the max. Very often, the Deities are served tenth class *bhoga*. No senior devotees' association, except for one or two who come now and then. Most of the devotees, except for the temple president and the new *bhaktas* (who are more or less innocent and unaware), do not have faith in the kind of leadership that we have in this part of the world, and if they still serve to some extent in ISKCON it is due to the fact that they still have some love for Sri Sri Radha Manohara.

Gopala Krishna Swami, comes two or three times a year for a tour of adulation (from those who are still in his trip), rather than to perform his GBC job. He seems to be very concerned about the number of "disciples" he makes, as if that would be symptom of success. He firmly believes that the *diksha-guru* is foremost to the *siksha-guru*. It would not be so bad if he alone believes that, but the worst thing is that he imposes such a misconception upon those who were pushed to take *diksha* from him. Is this temple his kingdom in which he can impose his ideology which everyone should abide by, or is it Srila Prabhupada's temple where pure Krishna consciousness should be prevailing? Satsvarupa dasa Goswami wrote in *Guru Reform Notebook*, page 4: "Gopala Krishna Maharaja cited three great challenges before ISKCON: 1. trying to bring back devotees who have left due to our mistakes..." As far as Montreal is concerned GKS hasn't done much in that direction. Has the GBC made any significant attempt to accomplish it? Please, keep your work going on. Please don't ever consider stopping your work. Let us dig out the truth.

Dasaratha Pandit dasa, Tucson AZ, 8.90:

Don't forget, do not send any VVR to this address anymore in the future. They will either get thrown out or sent back to you at your expense. So please don't waste laxmi [sic.] and paper.

Vrndavana dasa, Paris, France, 8.90:

Can you please give me some news from the challenge horse to the GBC because in Paris many devotees were very appreciative of your challenge and would like to know the finality of this story.

From Yasodanandana dasa, Ontario, 9.6.90:

Srila Prabhupada wrote to Kirtanananda Swami, 2.11.1967, this: "I wish that each and every branch shall keep their independent identity and cooperate keeping the acharya in the centre. On this principle we can open any number of branches all over the world. The Ramakrishna mission works on this principle and thus as organization they have done wonderfully..." Keep up the pressure on the GBC.

From Satyaraja dasa, to Gauridasa Pandit, 4.2.90

You asked about current projects: whew, that's a big subject! I am working on a follow-up to East-West Dialogues, but this time the conversations are with a rabbi. It's pretty intense so far. (Now available as a joint venture with New Jaipur Press: *Om Shalom*) And then I am also working on a follow-up to the *Six Goswamis* book. This one is called *Narottam, Shrinivas*, and *Shyamananda*. I am also working on *Changing Bodies: Reincarnation and the World Religions* and another book, called *Mother Cow: Her Exploitation and Liberation*. In addition to all these, I am writing BTG articles again, at the request of Jayadwaita Maharaja. So there is no dearth of activity.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

Satyaraja, keep up your literary work! The number of authors publishing Vaishnava literatures these days are too few, and the books you have put out are very substantial. ***Food For The Spirit*** **may have been the best one. The interviews are interesting, but I hope you expand and reprint your** ***Archeology & the Vaishnava Tradition*** **soon! How about a book giving Vedic solutions to all the world problems?**

From Barbara Van Dyck, Eau Claire, WI, 8.90:

In reading VVR #13 there is much bliss within my heart to see sincere devotees trying to establish reform within the Krishna consciousness movement. Before I received this issue I was humbled to receive a visit from Srila Prabhupada in a dream. He sat on one end of a couch and I was on the other end. He was so little and frail and his hands moved as he talked. Tears came to my eyes and I saw tears in his. I don't remember what he said. But he came to me, a woman, in Wisconsin. He came to visit me—an outsider—not even a devotee—a conditioned soul—of which I am ashamed, more so now. Let everyone know that he is stronger and can reach more people now than ever before, and he is doing that.

I hope we can reconcile all of this dispute and get to the business at hand: Krishna consciousness. I'm tired of all of the arguing. I want to grow, and I feel all of this is impeding my progress. I have achieved 16 rounds on the *japa* beads for one week now.

On first contact with Nalini Kantha dasa he said I am to be a teacher of Krishna consciousness. If that is the role I am to serve then I must prepare—because I want to be purified before I teach-whomever I teach. What I say now is nonsense. The only thing of real significance to me is my dream of Srila Prabhupada and I believe I must start from there.

I am reading on steps to initiation from the VVR. I have the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Bhagavatam*, and many others. I guess I have to take the steps alone out here. Then, when I come to New Jaipur in May 1991- I hope I will be ready to make a decision. Are there any other devotees in Eau Claire? Anywhere within 100 miles? Please send me a list. Enclosed is $20 for my VVR subscription and a donation to New Jaipur.

From P.K. Swami, Interreligious Affairs Dept, New Vrindaban, 8.90:

Greetings from the City of God! Our project to help manifest a Community of communities of various faiths (the city of God) is progressing nicely. We now have two small Christian communities, our original Hindu Vaishnava community, a Native American center underway, and a Unitarian minister and a Taoist minister living on the land. We are continuing with our ongoing effort to dialogue, share and celebrate with people of other faiths through our travels and our Interfaith Conferences. We will be in San Francisco next week for the Assembly of World Religions conference which will bring together spiritual leaders and scholars from around the world. We are now preparing for our fifth "Religion in the Year 2000" Interfaith Conference and Retreat (October 6-8) entitled "All Our Relations: The Unity of the Religions of the Earth." This will be a very special gathering as we will enact for the first time a "Blessing of the Animals" with priests, ministers, swamis, etc. from all of the faiths. The conference will focus on the need to come together in harmony with human beings, animals, and indeed all beings and things which make up a part of the entire earth environment. Because of the strong orientation of the Native American tradition towards a balanced and healthy environment, we will have several talks, workshops and ceremonies by those in the Native tradition. Ed "Eagle Man" McGaa, an Oglala Sioux lawyer, lecturer and Sweat Lodge ceremonial leader, will lead sweat lodges and other celebrations. Our beloved Cherokee teacher Grandmother Pa'Ris'ha will return for workshops and a journey around the medicine wheel. And our dear friend Sky Bear will show us the beauty of the Nabi way for non-natives who want to honor the Native path. We are delighted to have as our special guest Dr. Ann Wigmore who has travelled the globe for many years promoting a lifestyle and diet which can save the planet and elevate all of us physically, mentally and spiritually. Also joining us will be Father Anthony Ellenjimittam who has spent decades in Italy and India promoting the ideals of interfaith cooperation and Gandhian living. The usual delicious vegetarian meals prepared by our outstanding chef Martin Lyons, the warm hospitality, the beautiful mountain setting and the thrill of a weekend of harmonious interfaith living await you at our October Interfaith Retreat. Please be our guest if your schedule allows.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

Hodge-podge describes it nicely. Prabhupada would be furious! Who determined that inter-faith activities is the way to preach Krishna consciousness? While sitting in the sweat lodge, we discuss silent chanting of God's names? Looks like New Vrindavan went bonkers.

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

I recall that devotees in Vrindavan were considering hiring out Krishna-Balarama guest-room space for meetings. When Srila Prabhupada heard that an impersonalist group intended to hold a convention there he immediately forbade his disciples to have such persons discussing their *nonsense philosophy* on Krishna-Balarama's property.

We have a tradition of intolerance towards such offenders as impersonalists in our *sampradaya*. If we cannot make them into Vaishnavas then we should shun them: *mayavadi bashya sunile hoy sarva nasa*! "If one hears the *Mayavadi* philosophy everything will be destroyed." New Vrindaban has heard, willingly, and continues to hear such nonsense.

From Janakaraja dasa, Watford, England, 8-23-90:

I would request you to desist from sending your publication to us. I do not want to commit any offences to the Vaishnava devotees of the Lord and just the title of your magazine is enough to invoke such a reaction in me, what to speak of the contents. As a disciple of Srila Prabhupada of eighteen years I appreciate that all may not be perfect within our society but I am of the firm opinion that Prabhupada would have had any problems worked out in a spirit of faith that ISKCON is the incarnation of the Lord in His Name (S.B. 10-1-27). That our love for Srila Prabhupada will be shown by how we cooperate to keep this institution together is my personal yardstick in all dealings. To criticize the leaders of ISKCON and set yourself up as the unmotivated authority, I can only view as based on envy. To declare that these men cannot be qualified as *gurus* seems to me so akin to the attitude of the caste brahmins as to be contradictory to the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Anyway, I for one do not wish to have such useless blasphemy of those who have dedicated their lives to preaching Krishna consciousness coming through my letterbox.

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

Again the question of cooperation. Cooperation does not, to my mind, mean that I should simply keep quiet when my Godbrothers are intent on sawing off the branch on which they, and many other souls, are sitting. Numerous devotees have thanked us for what we, in our humble way, are attempting to do, as I think most of the letters in this section attest. If it were not for that, then we would perhaps have held our peace long past. I for one, never wished to set myself up as anything. If you would care to look at ISKCON's problems objectively and try to do *something* to set them straight so that I could concentrate on translating and suchlike, I would give you my blessings! By the way, the verb "blaspheme" is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary* thus: "utter profanity about, revile." We admit to having criticised some of our Godbrothers. To call that blasphemy is perhaps to take things a little too far.

From Devotional Service, 225 Oak Grove St. #205, Mpls, MN 55403:

You are invited to participate in "Devotional Service", a public letter, being developed in order to provide greater access to spiritual knowledge and spiritual association by creating a simple student-teacher link. We also hope to become a source of challenge and exchange in a search for practical ways to perform and improve our service to God. Therefore, we are inviting qualified instructors and sincere students to contribute thoughtful questions and answers about devotional service to our publication. If you are interested in participating, or want more information, please contact us. Thank you.

From Eleanor Grant, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 8.17.90:

In Karnamrita's *Response to ISKCON Journal* he makes the shocking statement, "Surely we (believe) Srila Prabhupada is at least as powerful as Lord Jesus Christ." Sorry, but I find such a suggestion deeply offensive. The person in our tradition who is at least as powerful as Jesus Christ is Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. No one else. It's very important that we keep things in perspective. There's another point that concerns me, arising out of the same article. Karnamrita states, "Srila Prabhupada was well able to establish whatever he liked. Many of his activities were unprecedented..." He proceeds to list a number of Prabhupada's innovations.

Elsewhere in the issue, we are given a lamentation by Nityananda about Kirtanananda Maharaja's alleged innovations.Why should I not conclude that Kirtanananda, like Prabhupada, is simply someone who knows who he is. Someone with the same authority and freedom to make adaptations to time and place and the needs of his followers. Please explain to me why I'm supposed to see any difference here.

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

I think, if you will permit me, that you have misconceptions both with respect to Lord Jesus and to Srila Prabhupada. Firstly, I guess you think that Jesus is an incarnation of God. I don't think he ever maintained such a thing, indeed, he repeatedly referred to the Lord as his father. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, according to our tradition, is the Father of Jesus Christ. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, and his follower, Srila Prabhupada, often stated that Lord Jesus was a *saktyavesa avatara* — such an incarnation is not a *plenary* incarnation, but rather a *jiva* invested with a particular potency of the Supreme Lord. It is the *potency* of the Lord, which is non-different from the *potent* Lord, that is the *avatara*, not the *jiva*. Note that in the case of Parasurama, a *saktyavesa avatara*, the *sakti* was withdrawn by Lord Ramachandra, the plenary expansion of Godhead.

With respect to Srila Prabhupada, he has told us in the *Chaitanya-charitamrita* that only one who is empowered by the Lord can spread the holy name throughout the world. Such empowerment is *sakti-avesa* by any other name. Thus, we generally conclude that Prabhupada, like Jesus Christ, is a *saktyavesa avatara*. At any rate, the bona fide *guru*, as the representative of the Godhead, is considered to be as good as the Godhead; thus he is called Thakura, which means "as good as God". If Jesus is a bona fide *guru*, and Srila Prabhupada is a bona fide *guru*, then they are both as good as God and deserve to be worshipped as such. To make a distinction between them, as you have, is sectarianism and should be avoided.

As for Kirtanananda, I'm sorry to say that he is not a bona fide *guru*. Srila Prabhupada certainly made adjustments to the regular practices of Vaishnavas when bringing the cult and teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to the West. He did not, at any time, however, disobey his spiritual master in making innovations or adjustments. Srila Prabhupada specifically forbade Kirtanananda from making a number of the "adjustments" he has since made. Prabhupada forbade him from lecturing in ISKCON temples as long as he was advocating such adjustments and opined that Kirtanananda, at the time of his deviating thus, should be confined to a mental institution. That Kirtanananda has still seen fit to make such changes is disobedience, plain and simple. Disobedience of the order of the spiritual master is considered to be a serious offence against the Holy Name and a great obstacle to spiritual advancement. Besides this sort of disobedience there are other matters with respect to Kirtanananda, which we need not discuss here, that prove him ineligible to vie with genuine preceptors such as Srila Prabhupada.

From Kapindra dasa, Prabhupada Sankirtan Center, New York, 6.26.90:

"Lord Chaitanya then inquired: what is the most profitable thing in the world, the essence of all auspicious events? Ramananda Raya replied that there is nothing as profitable as the association of pure devotees." So let us continue to work hard for Srila Prabhupada's return as official *guru* of ISKCON.

From Gauridasa Pandita Dasa, Seattle, WA, 5.31.90:

For the last six months we've been renting out halls in the University District where Srila Prabhupada personally preached back in 1968. We are having "The Love Feast" every Wednesday night and getting a grand response. As Srila Prabhupada said that to preach all we need is desire and everything else will come in time. We don't have the laxmi for a regular temple in this area now, but the preaching is going on and new devotees are being trained. As Srila Prabhupada said, everything we need to know is in his books and they are all-attractive. We've distributed hundreds of books and more and more new people are taking interest. This is real pleasure. To see new people take to Krishna Consciousness. I remember when I was transcendentally tricked by Tamala Krishna Maharaja into shaving my head and joining the Radha Damodara Party I got to see Srila Prabhupada in his room. Actually, I wasn't planning on joining then, although I knew it was inevitable, and TKG saw me leaving after the San Francisco Rathayatra, and asked me if I wanted to see Srila Prabhupada. I replied in the affirmative. He said, "Well, if you shave up and join our party you can see Srila Prabhupada in his room. I said I was attending College and working at Boeing in Seattle and couldn't join at this time although I was very impressed by the devotees and Sri Sri Radha Damodara. Then Tamala said, "Well, if we just give your hair a trim you'll be presentable and we can take you in to see Srila Prabhupada." I agreed and was led into the bathroom by Aja Prabhu (a so-called expert hair stylist) and he began to cut my hair. After a minute I looked in the mirror and was shocked to see bald patches here and there. I couldn't face the public like that and I threw my arms up and told him to just go ahead and shave it off. Anything would look better than that! Then I was dressed in a *dhoti* and proceeded to Srila Prabhupada's

quarters. I was very upset at the sudden change in my life; but relieved when I came before His Divine Grace. We entered the room one by one and offered Srila Prabhupada a rose and obeisances. Seeing Srila Prabhupada for the first time from a distance at the Rathayatra was ecstatic, but this was even more intense. Srila Prabhupada was gracefully sitting at his desk with one leg up and smiling, so effulgent! As we all finally took a seat Srila Prabhupada began to speak, "So you're all very bright-faced and fortunate to come to Lord Chaitanya's movement and now that you are fortunate; make others fortunate. Preach this message of Lord Chaitanya's all over the world..." He spoke for about 20 minutes more and also told us if we served Vishnujana Maharaja and Tamala K.G. nicely that he would be pleased. We offered our obeisances upon departing and I was overwhelmed with appreciation for His Divine Grace.

From Narasingha Guru dasa, New Vrindavan, 8.1.90:

You give credence to the absurd rumour that our monks are allotted 4 ounces of wine a day; where on earth did you get that drivel! And what is your motive that you should eagerly embrace such an allegation without bothering to speak with any of us first! As far as your self-righteous indignation over the "concocted innovations" of our chanting methods is concerned, please consider the following statements of Sanatana Goswami. "One should chant *japa* within his mind, because chanting *japa* in this way is faultless, and therefore, is the best of all" (*Digdarsini-tika*). "Chanting in one's mind is ten times better than murmuring the Name, which is one hundred times better than chanting loudly". (*Digdarsini-tika*). "Those who chant within the mind get one thousand times the benefit of chanting out loud". (*Rama-paddhatti*). Actually Bhaktipada says he doesn't care how you chant (aloud or silently) as long as you are calling and hearing with serious concentration, as opposed to mechanical observance of a ritual. He personally finds silent *japa* to be the most effective, and advises us to try it also. Are you so complacent in your own *sadhana* as to be disturbed by this? I may let any interested readers know hat they can write to me for a copy of our rebuttal to the previous diatribes by Umapati Swami and Rupa Vilasa, should they actually prefer to hear both sides before coming to a conclusion. In fact, they are our most welcome guests if they would care to come here and see for themselves.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

We apologise for believing the wine rumour. Not that taking a small quantities of wine is such a great deviation. Srila Prabhupada told Dhananjaya Prabhu that a little wine was good for the stomach – indeed, many Ayurvedic medicines (such as Dravanaksha) have fermented grapes as their basis. Srila Prabhupada is even said to have told devotees in Southern Europe to allow freshly pressed grape juice to sit for a few days before drinking it. "But that is wine, Srila Prabhupada!" He was told. "That's right." Came the reply. Of course, drinking wine to become intoxicated is sinful. Thus, such a beverage is probably best avoided altogether.

With respect to the chanting, our main criticism was of the New Vrindaban "meditation kits", comprising blindfold, earplugs, and operator's manual, and the suggestion that English phrases may be freely substituted for the *Maha-mantra*. Wearing a blindfold, which does not permit us to purify our vision by looking at the Deity etc., and which likely results in visual interference such as after-images, is no substitute for simply closing the eyes, if darkness is what one wishes. I never heard that any of our Acharyas wore blindfolds. Similarly, wearing earplugs probably results in one hearing the whine of the nervous system's functioning, which could prove more of a distraction than the sound of other Vaishnavas chanting. These seem artificial contrivances to us and are plainly unprecedented. True, there are no hard and fast rules for chanting the Holy Name, and Srila Prabhupada often chanted *japa* more or less inaudibly; but he *did* prefer *us* to chant our *japa* audibly. He defined japa thus: "When a *mantra* or hymn is chanted softly and slowly, that is called *japa*. The same *mantra*, when chanted loudly is called *kirtana*...In the *Padma Purana* there is a statement: 'For any person who is chanting the Holy Name either softly or loudly, the paths to liberation and even heavenly happiness are at once open.' " [NOD p.81] The word *japa* here refers to the chanting of the *Maha-mantra* of course. He also spoke of clearly audible chanting: "Chanting involves the activities of the upper and lower lips as well as the tongue. All three must be engaged in chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. The words 'Hare Krishna' should be very distinctly pronounced and heard. Sometimes one mechanically produces a hissing sound instead of chanting with the proper pronunciation with the help of the lips and tongue." [Cc. Adi 17.32 purport] Srila Prabhupada also indicated that it is necessary to practice chanting audibly in order to be able to vibrate the Holy Name at the time of death: "...one should chant the Holy Names of the Lord loudly and distinctly. If one does so, it is quite possible that even at the time of death he will be properly able to chant the Holy Names of the Lord with love and faith." [Bhag. 6.2.49 purport] Srila Prabhupada goes to far, even, as to make loud chanting of the Holy Name an injunction: "The first regulative principle is that one must chant the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* loudly enough so that he can hear himself, and one must vow to chant a fixed number of rounds." [Cc. Antya 11.24 purport] This statement clearly refers to *japa*. That Srila Sanatana Goswami perhaps cited some verses in his *Digdarshini* commentary referring to the silent chanting of certain *mantras*, such as the *Gayatri Mantras*, we do not deny. The fact remains that our Acharya, Srila Prabhupada, preferred us to chant the *Maha-mantra* at least loudly enough that the individual chanting could hear. Why insist on changing anything unless there is some definite improvement? Why consider that we know better, in almost every department, than Srila Prabhupada did? It is simply outrageous that the New Vrindavanites see fit to tamper with almost everything Srila Prabhupada gave us. Remember this, if not for Srila Prabhupada you wouldn't know a thing about the Holy Name!

From Jagajjivana dasa, Lafayette, CA, 9/5/90:

Some happy news: Dr. Judah's physicians say his prostate cancer is in remission, and Dr. Judah has read VVRs #11 and #12 and says, "I liked them very much." He just returned two or three weeks ago from Europe. So in case you have an extra VVR #13 that you could send him...

From Gadai dasa, Angelica, NY, 8/2/90:

Thank you very much for VVR #13. It was well worth waiting for. The GBC defeated themselves by publishing *ISKCON Journal*. What a farce that was!

From Yugala Kishora dasa, Montreal, Canada, 9/10/90:

The *Seventh Goswami* is a great blessing to me. I could not stop reading once I got started!! All my humble obeisances to all of you engaged in this kind of literary work. May Lord Krishna grant you more inspiration to continue.

From Uddhava dasa, Ireland, 7/20/90:

Please find enclosed my subscription. Thank you very much for your thought provoking articles, and for refusing to be intimidated.

From Lochana dasa Thakura, President, Almviks Gard, Sweden, 9.10.90:

We want to cancel our subscription to the VVR, as this magazine is no longer representing Srila Prabhupada's mission and ISKCON society.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

We wish the GBC faithfully represented Srila Prabhupada's mission – but we have serious, justifiable doubts that it does these days.

From Bill Wulfhoop, Lorain OH, 9.20.90:

Thank you again for everything you're doing. A traveling devotee told me he's seen for himself that New Jaipur is the hardest working and most strict community in ISKCON. I am inspired, and if you ever need any manpower, please let me know. My only charge will be devotee association.

From Bhaktarupa dasa, to Anonymous dasa, Calcutta, 5.27.90:

The *ISKCON Journal* cannot accept anonymous letters, but I would like to offer my personal, unofficial comments. You seem to have come to the conclusion that the GBC is destroying Srila Prabhupada's movement through its policies on the *guru* issue. This may be due in part to the very unfair characterization of the GBC by the VVR and others who have little knowledge of the actual situation. In contrast to the behavior of the GBC before its overhaul by the 50 man committee a few years ago, the present body is very thoughtful on the issues, open to criticism, and more in tune with the general pulse of the society. It does not claim to be infallible, but it is functioning well enough to adequately direct the preaching worldwide. In reaching its conclusions on the *guru* issue it considered the scriptural references carefully and without bias, heard from many sources, and remains open to the possibility of its own errors. If it is wrong, it will eventually correct its mistakes. At this crucial juncture in our movement's history we must be prepared to put aside our rhetoric and keep in the association of devotees, in spite of our differences. I hope you can at least keep an open mind to the ideas expressed on this issue by the GBC.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

With all due respect, and there is no doubt he is a very nice devotee, I think Bhaktarupa Prabhu is unfortunately always on the wrong side of the fence due to his nature as a faithful ISKCON party man and bureaucrat. The above explanation is nothing but standard PR propaganda. Bhaktarupa probably believes all of it, too...

Comment, Karnamrita dasa:

If the GBC has been as thoroughly reformed as Sriman Bhaktarupa suggests, then one is bound to wonder why they permitted the editors of the *ISKCON Journal* to falsify interviews, to publish the testimony of persons of far more dubious character than Gauridasa Pandita, to publish totally unsubstantiated slander, as well as to endorse the bogus acharya system favoured by members of the Gaudiya Matha openly hostile to Srila Prabhupada, etc., etc., and to do so without the courtesy of an invitation to the editors of VVR to defend their position. For all our faults, and we have often been accused (as above) of extreme prejudice and bias, we have always published, intact, any material submitted to us by members of the GBC, albeit with rather impudent ripostes. It is also a fact that the materials for the *ISKCON Journal* were gathered and prepared by Ravindraswarupa dasa *well before the GBC had even met and discussed the matter as a body*. We wholeheartedly support the principle of an ISKCON governed by a properly constituted GBC. Unfortunately, the current GBC refuses to even entertain the possibility that it has propounded *apasiddhantic* philosophical conclusions that diminish the position and paramountcy of Srila Prabhupada.

With the interests of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON at heart, VVR has offered a sincere philosophical challenge to our respected GBC Godbrothers. They have not, with the exception of the now repudiated San Diego debate, deigned to face their detractors in open, Vedic style debate, as is the tradition in the Vaishnava *sampradayas* under such circumstances, and have resorted instead to the tactics of totalitarianism. If they are so certain of their position why do they not debate with us, for as many days as it takes, and publicly defeat us? If Baladeva Vidyabushana Prabhu, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura and other great souls were willing to meet their opponents face to face, why is the GBC unwilling to do so? Unpleasant as it may sound, many devotees have opined that their draconian response is indicative of their having personal interests to protect.

From Ekachakra dasa, Nigeria Africa, 9.12.90:

I have distributed the 20 copies of VVR you sent me to interested devotees in West Africa, and each copy is being passed around, read and re-read. The atmosphere here is very confusing and saddening because nobody knows who is really in charge. At the Mayapura meeting this year, the GBC posted Kavichandra Swami as our GBC, but he has not yet come here despite several promises. Bhaktitirtha Swami has not returned since January. He has not attended GBC meetings since 1987, and no one seems to know what he is doing. We in Africa could use some senior Vaishnava association! Keep sending the VVR please.

Comment, Nityananda dasa, Ed:

It certainly does seem that Africa and other parts of the Third World have been neglected by the GBC and *sannyasis* from the western countries. If subtle racism is not the explanation, maybe the austerity of preaching in Africa is not appealing. Why don't more *sannyasis* go to Africa to preach, where devotees would join in droves? Any volunteers? Speak up, we can't hear you!

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#12 THIS IS LIFE Color 2 HR, subtitled Hindi film as good as Hollywood's. Juncture of Gita & life's traps as hero learns to surrender to Krishna. ..$20

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GREATER ISKCON CONVENTION

New Jaipur May 1991

New Jaipur will host a GREATER ISKCON CONVENTION, comprising lectures, discussions, and workshops in May 1991, the exact dates to be published soon. Four days, Thursday thru Sunday, will feature 10 sessions in which the following subjects will be discussed:

1. Lives of the Vaishnava Acharyas; 2. Guru and disciple in Greater ISKCON; 3. Implementing Varnashram; 4. Astrology & its use in Krishna consciousness; 5. Vedic Museum and Diorama Preaching; 6. Srila Prabhupada's Gurukula; 7. Home Schooling Gurukula; 8. The ISKCON reform movement; 9. Deity worship; 10. Future direction of ISKCON

Those interested in participating, by attending or speaking, or by helping to organize, please contact VVR. We hope to conduct this convention in a positive, enlightening and constructive manner with a view that ISKCON is evolving in a way that these kinds of subjects now deserve to be discussed in depth. We will invite such esteemed guests as Yasodanandana, Nrisimha, Niscintya, Dristadyumna, Guru-kripa, Jagajjivan, Puranjana, Brahmarata, Gaura-kesava, Yasomatinandana, Syamasundara, Padyumna and others. The sessions will be strictly moderated and guided. The aim is to discuss, debate and provoke thought in an amiable atmosphere devoid of fault finding or offensive behaviour...the quest for *siddhanta*, and the reinvigoration of preaching is all!

Challenge Horse to the GBC!

VVR's Challenge Horse remains on our page! The GBC has not yet replied to the following challenges, and until they do, the Challenge Horse remains on — in their territory:

1. Substantiate the present ISKCON Guru System with reference to Srila Prabhupada's teachings – especially in regards to the appointment and qualification issues.

2. If unable to do so conclusively, abandon the present system as unauthorized and institute the Ritvik Acharya System authorized by Srila Prabhupada in 1977. This would not preclude the appearance or recognition of new Diksha Gurus who are qualified as described in sastra.

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