

"OUR LIVING GURU"

by the Prabhupadanugas, 1983

I shall remain your personal guide whether I am physically present or not, just as I am getting guidance from my Guru Maharaja."

--*Srila Prabhupada, October, 1977, Vrindavana*

DEDICATION

Thanks to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, we can get free from the treadmill of material desire and disappointment. Thanks to Srila Prabhupada, we can get free from the dreary, dreary wheel of repeated birth and death in this material world. By Srila Prabhupada's grace, we can reenter the eternal, radiant reality of our totally blissful relationship with Lord Krishna in Krishna's transcendental abode. Whether we know it as yet or not, out of his pure, transcendental love and kindness, Srila Prabhupada has arranged for our repatriation to the spiritual world. All over this world, he has initiated the chanting of the maha-mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

In the Kali-yuga, the current dark and degraded era of quarrel, this chanting of Hare Krishna is the only method recommended for spiritual deliverance and enlightenment, affirms the time-honored Vedic literature. And we know about the Vedic literature, the maha-mantra, the complete Vedic culture and enlightenment thanks to Srila Prabhupada, who in 1965, nearly at the age of seventy, journeyed to America all alone. Srila Prabhupada, guru for the coming golden age of spiritual enlightenment. Srila Prabhupada, Our Living Guru.

FOREWORD

"What happened to the Hare Krishna movement?" ask scholars such as Dr. J. Stillson Judah, government leaders, ordinary people and notably, friends and family of many a betrayed Krishna person. "Since your Swami Prabhupada passed away, it seems that things have been falling apart. What happened?"

To answer this question and assist in putting things back together, Our Living Guru searches the principles and conclusions enunciated by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. For as Srila Prabhupada, the Hare Krishna's movement's Founder-Acharya or eternal preceptor, comments in His translation of the fourth canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, "Unfortunately, when the acharya

disappears, rogues and nondevotees take advantage and immediately begin to introduce unauthorized principles..." (SB 4.28.48)

Just as Srila Prabhupada had predicted, soon after he disappeared, in November of 1977, a coterie of his leading students introduced the boldly unauthorized principle of the "living guru." To gain full spiritual realization, claimed these plainly nonrealized students, the aspiring soul needed a "living guru, someone physically present" in a material body. For total spirituality, the aspirant allegedly needed the new "living guru's" total physicality, which these students would provide.

Further, these students alleged, since Prabhupada no longer had such "living" physicality, no longer could spiritual aspirants take shelter of Him and accept Him as their eternal preceptor.

"Our Living Guru" does not presume to see the innermost motive behind a given word or deed by any of Srila Prabhupada's students, all of whom deserve a measure of respect for having rendered service to Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and to His beloved emissary, Srila Prabhupada. "Our Living Guru" does look to Srila Prabhupada's voluminous and luminous directives, so that all of us may see the distinctions He draws between words and deeds authorized and unauthorized.

For the benefit of us all, including those newest to Srila Prabhupada's Vedic translations and commentaries, "Our Living Guru" moves through a gradual, step-wise progression of fairly common sense questions, along with answers that the Vedic literature and Srila Prabhupada provide. So, according to the Vedic literature and Srila Prabhupada, what, really, is the meaning of guru? And living? And disciplic succession? And connection with the disciplic succession? And initiation? By Srila Prabhupada's grace, may "Our Living Guru" help sharpen our transcendental understanding.

The Authors

CHAPTER ONE

SOME BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

Q. Who is His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and in brief, what has He given to the world?

A. We can appreciate Srila Prabhupada and His gifts to us by considering just one verse of thousands he has translated from the time honored Vedic literature: brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavan jīva guru-kṛiṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-lāta-

bija: "According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Krishna. By the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service." (Cc. M.L. 19.151)

Srila Prabhupada has given the whole world the opportunity to associate with Him and receive the seed of the creeper of the Lord's devotional service, which can grow all the way back to the Lord's own transcendental abode. How has Srila Prabhupada enabled us to associate with Him and Lord Krishna? He has established His International Society for Krishna Consciousness, also known as the Hare Krishna movement, a worldwide federation of Vedic devotional communities and devotees; He has written and spoken volume upon volume of Vedic devotional translation and commentary; and he has initiated the world into the devotional chanting of the Maha-Mantra (Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare), the process recommended by the Vedic literature for spiritual realization in this age.

Srila Prabhupada has fulfilled the prediction mentioned in the Caitanya Caritamrta, that the Holy name of Krishna and Lord Chaitanya would one day be chanted in every town and village around the world. Many scholars and great devotees agree that he was a shakti-avesha avatar, or a specifically empowered personality who came to deliver the essence of Vedic knowledge all over the world. One prominent south Indian Acharya commented in 1976, after looking at one of Prabhupada's books and witnessing the preaching of some of his disciples: "This person is the summum bonum of all the acharyas."

1.2) Q. If someone knew a bit about the Vedic culture and wanted to become spiritually realized, how would he go about it?

A. Naturally, as we see confirmed in the Hari Bhakti Vilasa, Bhakter mahatmyam akarnya tam iccham sad-gurum bhajet: "If one desires the devotional service of the Lord, one must worship the sad guru, the eternal preceptor guru."

And the sterling and uplifting words, actions and character of Srila Prabhupada reveal Him to be a one-hundred-percent self-realized and God-realized sad guru, the eternal preceptor guru for the world, directly empowered by Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to guide us in the supreme science of self and God and our loving relationship with the Lord.

Accordingly, throughout His numerous volumes of Vedic translation and commentary, Srila Prabhupada highlights the first step on the path to spiritual realization_adau guru-ashrayam: we must take shelter of the bona fide eternal preceptor guru.

For instance, in Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.14.1., Srila Prabhupada writes, "The most important information in this verse is Hari-guru-charana-aravinda.... Actually his (the spiritual aspirant's) only business is to accept the spiritual master, the guru, and through him we must accept the lotus feet of the Lord."

1.3) Q. But even a nonrealized neophyte_if he sincerely delivers the Lord's teachings, can't we see him as our eternal preceptor guru, because "Guru is one"?

A. True, even a nonrealized neophyte may be able to deliver the Lord's teachings, but only partially, due to his partial knowledge and realization. In other words, because his knowledge and realization are, after all, only partial, the neophyte is "one with" but also "different from" the pure disciplic succession of completely God-realized eternal preceptor gurus.

And so Srila Prabhupada writes: "In this verse (Nectar of Instruction, text 5) Srila Rupa Goswami advises the devotee to be intelligent to distinguish between the kanistha-adhikari (neophyte), madhyama-adhikari (intermediate), and uttama-adhikari (fully self-realized)...Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has given some hints to the effect that an uttama-adhikari Vaishnava can be recognized by His ability to convert many fallen souls to Vaishnavism. One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama adhikari. A neophyte Vaishnava or a Vaishnava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama adhikari as a spiritual master."

Unhappily, since Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, some of his neophyte followers have telescoped the loose-to-strict spectrum of the word "guru." These nonrealized followers have felt compelled to guide aspirants as if they had attained the lofty post of fully realized eternal preceptor gurus. It is not necessary at this point to retrace the ensuing trail of faith-shaking falldowns, scandals, cover-ups, criminal acts, repression and violence towards followers, and so on, which results from such unauthorized imitation.

As Srila Prabhupada underscores in Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-Lila 24.330, "The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees, and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class...

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

"One should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or maha-bhagavata without being self-realized," Srila Prabhupada warns in Nectar of Instruction, page 58, "for by such imitation one will eventually become degraded."

1.4) Q. What is the difference between imitating and following and what are the respective results?

A. Srila Prabhupada warned numerous times about the potentially dangerous results of imitating the pure devotee and great powerful personalities: "It is best therefore, that one not try to imitate the powerful, but simply endeavor to follow their instructions." (Bhagavad-gita lecture, 30 December 1968, Los Angeles)

"Actual blissful spiritual life, manifested in genuine spiritual laughing, crying and dancing, is the symptom of real advancement in Krishna consciousness, which can be achieved by a person who voluntarily engages in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. If one is not yet developed imitates such symptoms artificially, he creates chaos in the spiritual life of human society." (Cc. Adi-Lila 7-88)

Srila Prabhupada definitely did not support some of the fundamental pillars of the living guru project, such as "one may imitate the maha-bhagavata (Srila Prabhupada) because it is good for preaching and it produces so many practical results."

Instead, Srila Prabhupada viewed this imitative tendency as a pillar of disaster: "One who tries to imitate the Mahajanas just to become an imitative spiritual master is certainly far away from following in the footsteps of the Mahajanas." (Cc. ML 17.185) "So don't try to imitate. My Guru maharaja has strictly forbidden. Don't try to imitate big personalities like Haridasa Thakura, Rupa Goswami. He used to say...So it is no use imitating Rupa Goswami, to imitate the dress and then as soon as there is an opportunity smoke bidi. Don't do this nonsense. This is no use. Imitation. Anusarana (following), not anukarana (imitating). Anukarana is dangerous. Anusaran. Sadhu marga gamanam. This is bhakti. We shall try to follow the footsteps of big, big devotees, sadhus...We cannot...We shall try to follow. Don't try to imitate. That is very dangerous." (Lecture, 25 February 1977)

Prabhupada further warned of the dangerous result of the imitative mentality displayed by some of his students. "Mahajano yena gatah sa panthah. Mahajanas, great personalities, what they have done, you cannot imitate them. You have to follow them. You have to follow the instruction of Krishna or His representative, but you cannot imitate them. Then you'll fall down." (Lecture, 1 May 1969, Boston) "Similarly, those who are powerful, Isvara, godly, you cannot imitate their actions. Similarly we cannot imitate the powerful, we have to simply follow the instructions of the powerful." (Conversation 4 June 1974)

Srila Prabhupada takes the matter even further, severely condemning the imitative mentality of neophytes who think they have become liberated. "Therefore you must

follow the regulative principles. As soon as you become a rascal_ 'Now I have become advanced. I don't require to chant sixteen rounds. I can do whatever I like,' then he has gone to hell. Upstart, immediately he becomes a paramahamsa? He is rascal. He was given the path of becoming paramahamsa. One is admitted in the school, he must learn, and one day he will become M.A. But simply by entering in the school, if he says, 'I am an M.A.,' that is rascaldom. One has to try very rigidly then he'll become paramahamsa. Therefore amongst the devotees, there are three grades: kanistha adhikari, madhyama adhikari, and uttama-adhikari. So if the kanistha-adhikari thinks that 'I have become uttama adhikari,' then he's rascal. He's a rascal. If he wants to imitate the uttama-adhikari, then he's a rascal." (Morning walk, 4 February 1976)

1.5) Q. But isn't also said somewhere that "everyone should try to become a guru?"

A. Yes, in a carefully restricted sense. When Sri Krishna Chaitanya, the most magnanimous avatara or divine incarnation, appeared five centuries ago, He taught, amara ajnaya guru hana_ "By my order, you all become gurus." Yet, in the explanatory purport two verses later (Cc. M.L. 7.130), Srila Prabhupada clarifies that one should preach to his friends and neighbors, instructing them in Krishna consciousness. This is called instructing or shiksha-guru, a person who preaches on behalf of the eternal preceptor guru: "One only has to follow the instruction of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, chant the Hare Krsna maha-mantra, and instruct relatives and friends in the teachings of Bhagavad-Gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam." Similarly, Christians "witness" or instruct their friends and neighbors. Unfortunately, the living guru project intentionally misconstrues Lord Chaitanya's instruction. They artificially assume that such preachers or witnesses are supposed to be worshiped as if they are on the same level as Jesus Christ.

1.6) Q. So can we delve briefly into the meaning of eternal preceptor guru? Who and what does the eternal preceptor guru have to be?

A: Good as Krishna. In Bhagavad-Gita 2.8. Srila Prabhupada points out, "Help can only be given by a spiritual master like Krishna. Therefore, the conclusion is that a spiritual master who is one hundred percent Krishna conscious is the bona fide spiritual master, for he can solve the problems of life."

Confidential associate. As Srila Prabhupada writes in the Caitanya Caritamrta, Adi-Lila, 1.46, "The spiritual master is always considered either one of the confidential associates of Radharani (the Lord's eternal consort) or a manifested representation of Srila Nityananda Prabhu (the Lord's direct expansion and brother, Lord Balarama)."

Assists gopis. And in a letter dated 26th September 1969, Srila Prabhupada adds, "On the whole, the spiritual master is an agent of Krishna.... Either he is assistant to the Gopis (the Lord's cowherd girl friends) or assistant to the cowherd boys. He is

on the level of Krishna. That is the verdict of all scriptures. Krishna is worshipable God and the spiritual master is worshiper God."

Sees Krishna. Also, as Srila Prabhupada notes in S.B. 4.3.23, "Astottara-sata (a reference to the 108 Gopis) is added to the name of the spiritual master to indicate one situated in suddha sattva, or in the transcendental state of Vasudeva..."

"Only in this suddha sattva state," writes Srila Prabhupada in S.B. 1.2.19, "can one always see Krishna eye to eye, by dint of pure affection for the Lord."

"Everything within this material world is fully manifested to a devotee who has seen the Supreme Personality of Godhead Bhagavad-gita therefore advises tad viddhi pranipatena." (S.B. 8.6.9)

Always thinks of Krishna. "Those who are actually pure devotees are celebrated as mahatmas, or great sages, personalities perfect in knowledge. They always think of the Supreme Lord and His lotus feet, and thus they become automatically liberated." (Krishna Book, Chapter 86)

"As the devotees always think of Krishna within their hearts, Krishna always also thinks of His devotees within Himself." (Krishna book chapter 47)

"The pure devotee is always absorbed in thoughts of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (S.B. 4.31.20)

Respected as God is. In The Science of Self Realization chapter "What is a guru?" Srila Prabhupada points out, "Because he is the most confidential servitor of God, the guru is offered the same respect that we offer God."

Directly empowered. And in Cc. Antya-Lila, Srila Prabhupada writes this: "Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura explains that unless one is directly empowered by the causeless mercy of Krishna, one cannot become the spiritual master of the entire world (jagad-guru). One cannot become an acharya simply by mental speculation. The true acharya presents Krishna to everyone by preaching the holy name of the Lord throughout the world. Thus, the conditioned souls, purified by chanting the holy name, are liberated from the blazing fire of material existence. In this way, spiritual benefit grows increasingly full, like the waxing moon in the sky."

Embracing Krishna. "The true acharya, the spiritual master of the entire world, must be considered an incarnation of Krishna's mercy. Indeed, he is personally embracing Krishna. He is, therefore, the spiritual master of all the varnas... and asramas...(social and spiritual divisions). Since he is understood to be the most advanced devotee, he is called paramahansa-thakura." Paramahansa means "great swan-like saint"; thakura, "as good as God."

Embraced by Krishna. In Cc. Madhya-Lila, 25.9, Srila Prabhupada adds still more details to this awesome picture of the eternal preceptor guru: "Such an acharya or spiritual master should be considered nondifferent from Krishna; that is, he should be considered the incarnation of Lord Krishna's potency. Such a personality is Krishnalingita vigraha_ that is, he is always embraced by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna... He is the guru or spiritual master for the entire world, a devotee on the topmost platform, the maha-bhagavata stage..."

Note: Prabhupada clearly establishes the standard and qualification of the actual maha-bhagavata pure devotee as opposed to the imitator or neophyte. The GBC recognizes that the above qualifications are required to be a worshipable sampradaya acharya. However, the living gurus stated in 1978 that they had "assumed the position of nikunja yuno (assisting the gopis)" knowing well that they had not achieved that platform. Some of the living gurus are still worshiped as nikunjo rati keli siddhyai. Some of them are now "discussing the intimate pastimes of the gopis"!

Mahabhagavat. In Cc. Madhya, 24.330, Srila Prabhupada emphasizes, "the guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees, and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class. The first class devotee is the spiritual master for all kinds of people. It is said: guru nrinam. The word nrinam means 'of all human beings....' "When one has attained the topmost position of maha-bhagavata, he is to be accepted as a guru and worshiped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of guru."

1.7) Q. It seems clear the only person who fits this strict definition of "eternal preceptor guru," or maha-bhagavata, is Srila Prabhupada. Right?

A. Some of Srila Prabhupada's followers have not agreed. Shortly after Srila Prabhupada departed, in November 1977, members of the Governing Body Commission (GBC) started spreading the idea that Srila Prabhupada was no longer actually a "living guru"_and that before disappearing, he had expressly appointed some of the GBC men as his successors or "living gurus."

Tape appoints officiating priests (ritviks). The new "living gurus" also brought forward a tape wherein Srila Prabhupada allegedly ordained them as his successors. Yet on the actual tape, when asked about "initiations. . .when you are no longer with us," Srila Prabhupada stated, "I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating (gurus or) acharya." And when asked whether his reply meant "ritvik acharya," or ritual priest, Srila Prabhupada answered, "Yes."

Tape not circulated. So for would-be eternal gurus, the so-called appointment tape was really a disappointment. But perhaps because the tape was mostly "heard about" and not factually available to be actually heard, the appointment claim survived.

Letter confirming Prabhupada's arrangement: officiating representatives. Srila Prabhupada also confirmed his intention to select some of his students as officiating representatives. In a letter signed by him, dated 9th July 1977, he clearly set the guidelines for the representatives. "After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupada has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representatives..."

Reconfirmation of the officiating priest nomination. In a conversation with his secretary, Srila Prabhupada confirmed his intent. "Continue to be a ritvik (officiating priest) and act on my (Prabhupada's) charge." (Conversation, 19 July 1977)

Is it clear? Srila Prabhupada, as a tri kala jna, or perfectly realized yogi with knowledge of past, present and future, knew that some of his disciples would still not clearly understand his intent: for them to function as deputies and officiating acharyas.

As such, in a not too well known conversation (hidden by some GBC from the rest of the devotees, until official publication, a nominal one-thousand copy release, in 1990) with some of his leading disciples, one month before his departure, he clearly uses the word deputy 5 times in one conversation with regards to initiations after his physical demise. "I have deputed some of my disciples to initiate. Is it clear?"

Guru appointments condemned. Moreover, Srila Prabhupada had often expressed profound disapproval of guru appointments, as for instance in a lecture on Caitanya Caritamrta, on 19th April 1967: "In our mission, my spiritual master never designated anybody as acharya."

Appointment: no such thing. And on 2nd November 1977, just twelve days before his disappearance, Srila Prabhupada was asked about his "successor." Prabhupada: (Some Indians had asked) 'After you who will take the leadership?' Everyone will take, all my disciples. If you want, you can take also. (Laughter) But if you follow. They are prepared to sacrifice everything, so they'll take the leadership. I may, one, may go away, but there will be hundreds, and they'll preach. If you want, you can also become a leader. We have no such thing, that 'here is (the next) leader.' Anyone who follows the previous leadership, he is a leader. 'Indian,' we have no such distinctions, 'Indian,' 'European.'

Brahmananda: They wanted an Indian to be the leader?

Prabhupada: Yes. Everyone, all my disciples, they are leaders. As purely as they follow, they become a leader. 'You are Indian but you don't want (to follow strictly).' I told them that.

Tamala Krishna: Yes, they probably wanted to propose somebody who would take over our movement.

Appointment: all nonsense. **Prabhupada:** "Yes. 'Leaders.' All nonsense. Leader means one who has become first class disciple. He is leader. Evam parampara praptam. One who is perfectly following... Our instruction is ara na kariha mane asa. You know this? What is that? Guru mukha padma vakya, cittete kariya aikya, ara na kariha mane asa. Who is leader? A leader, to become leader, is not very difficult, provided one is prepared to follow the instructions."

Additionally, in the same conversation, Srila Prabhupada remarked to an Indian gentleman, "Only Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (an incarnation of Krishna) can take my place. He will take care of the movement."

Appointment: a concoction. Srila Prabhupada also writes, "In the beginning, during the presence of Om Vishnupada Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya Astottara-sata Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires.

"Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a Governing Body and conduct missionary activities cooperatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next (guru) acharya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of acharya, and they split in two factions over who the next acharya would be. Consequently, both factions were asara, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order spiritual master....

False appointees: occupy property. "The members of the self appointed acharya's party who occupied the property of the Gaudiya Matha (the mission of Srila Prabhupada's spiritual master) are satisfied, but they could make no progress in preaching." (Cc. Adi Lila 12.8) Similarly, most of Prabhupada's original disciples no longer feel wanted, or even welcome, at Prabhupada's temple properties, thanks to the falsely "appointed living gurus."

He NEVER said. Further, on the 16th of August 1976, in Bombay, Srila Prabhupada asked rhetorically, "Why did this Gaudiya Matha fail? Because they tried to become more than guru. He, before passing away, he gave all direction and never said that 'This man should be the next acharya.' But these people, just after his passing away, they began to fight, 'who shall be acharya?' That is the failure."

In other words, like post-1977 ISKCON, the post-1936 Gaudiya Matha had its own "living guru" project that tried to make nonrealized neophytes into eternal preceptor gurus. And that was why the Gaudiya Matha failed.

Srila Prabhupada continued, "They (the leaders of the Gaudiya Matha's 'living guru' project) never thought, 'Why (did) guru maharaja give us instructions on so many things, why he did not say that this man should be (the next) acharya?'" They wanted to create artificially somebody as acharya and everything failed. They did not consider even with common sense that if Guru maharaja wanted to appoint somebody as acharya, why he did not say?

Unfit gurus. "He said so many things and this point he missed? The real point? And they insisted upon it. They declared some unfit person to become acharya. Then another man came, then another acharya, another acharya." Note: Many GBC's still imply that Prabhupada would have "missed the point" if he had not appointed the living gurus.

"So better remain a foolish person perpetually to be directed by guru maharaja. That is perfection. And as soon as he learns that guru maharaja is dead, 'Now I am so advanced that I can kill my guru and I become guru.' Then he is finished." Note: ISKCON's GBC have even exactly duplicated the Gaudiya Matha's "guru reform": "another man came, then another acharya, another acharya." The "reformed living guru project" has gone on to make "another" seventy plus gurus. But Prabhupada also condemns this as "killing guru."

1.9) Q. Killing their guru? Why did Srila Prabhupada characterize the "living guru" advocates so starkly?

A. We can understand that Srila Prabhupada truly felt it was "better to remain a foolish person perpetually directed by guru maharaja," Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati. Eyes anointed with spiritual vision, Srila Prabhupada saw Srila Bhaktisiddhanta as always living: present, potent, actively directing the Gaudiya Matha, his spiritual mission.

But somehow, the "living guru" advocates saw their eternal preceptor guru as nonliving. Absent, impotent. So in a practical sense they were, and are to this day, killing him, stifling his desire to give newer and newer students his shelter.

According to the "living guru" advocates, after his disappearance, the completely Krishna conscious eternal preceptor guru (whether Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura or Srila Prabhupada) is no longer truly living. No longer can he personally give shelter.

Thus the spiritual aspirant now must choose among various nonrealized neophyte "living gurus." No longer can the aspirant take shelter of the genuine eternal preceptor guru, who is completely God-realized. Self-realized, yes, but absent. In this sense, the living guru advocates really are killing the genuine living guru, Srila Prabhupada: they make him seem absent and unavailable.

But, of course, nothing or no one can actually make the genuine living guru absent and unavailable, as Srila Prabhupada reassured his student Rukmini Dasi after a lecture in Montreal on 18th of August 1968:

Rukmini: I feel so far away from you, you know, when you're not here, Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, that you should not think. If...the words...there are two conceptions: the physical conception and the vibrational conception. So physical conception is temporary. The vibration conception is eternal. Just as we are enjoying or relishing the vibration of Krishna's teachings. So by vibration He is present.

As soon as we chant Hare Krishna or chant Bhagavad-gita or Bhagavat, so He is present immediately by His vibration. He's absolute. Therefore try to remember His words of instruction; you'll not feel any separation. You'll feel that He is with you. So we should associate by the vibration and not by the physical presence. That is real association. Sabdyad anavritti. By sound. Just like we are touching Krishna immediately by sound. Sound vibration. So we should give more stress on the sound vibration, either of Krishna or of the spiritual master. Then we'll feel happy and no separation. When Krishna departed from this world, at that time Arjuna was overwhelmed with sorrow and he began to remember the instruction of Bhagavad-gita.

You'll find in the Srimad Bhagavatam. Then he was pacified. He immediately began to remember the teachings which was taught to him in the battlefield of Kuruksetra and he was pacified. He was His constant friend, so when Krishna went to His abode he was feeling overwhelmed, but he began to remember His teachings. So whenever we shall feel separation, the best thing is to remember the teachings. Then it will be very nice.

And in a morning walk conversation in Berkeley, on 21 July 1975, Srila Prabhupada reaffirmed his lasting spiritual presence, his presence by message, vani:

Narayana: So those disciples who don't have the opportunity to see you or speak with you...

Prabhupada: That he (Srila Bhaktisiddhanta) was speaking, vani and vapuh (presence by message versus presence by body). Even if you don't see his body, you take his words, vani.

Narayana: But how do they know they're pleasing you?

Prabhupada: If you actually follow the words of guru, that means he is pleased. And if you do not follow, how he can be pleased?

Sudama: Not only that, but your mercy is spread everywhere, and if we take advantage, you told us once, then we will feel the result.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Jayadvaita: And if we have faith in what the guru says, then automatically we'll do that.

Prabhupada: Yes. My Guru maharaja passed away in 1936, and I started this movement in 1965, thirty years after. Then I am getting the mercy of Guru. This is vani. Even if the guru is not physically present, if you follow the vani, then you are getting help.

Sudama: So there is no question of ever separation as long as the disciple follows the instruction of guru...

One of the above students, today a "living guru" advocate, now tells spiritual aspirants that they cannot personally get help from Srila Prabhupada. Somehow, somewhere, the new students must find a "living guru," (regardless of his actual level of realization) even if that means waiting for another birth. Interestingly, "You must wait for another birth" in the brahmana caste is the same bodily-conception gobbledygook that Srila Prabhupada's Western-bodied disciples hear from the caste or smarta brahmanas.

In a lecture given on 15 January 1969, Prabhupada explains the true nature of the spiritual master's message and its potency: "So although a physical body is not present, the vibration should be accepted as the presence of the spiritual master, vibration. What we have heard from the spiritual master, that is living..."

CHAPTER TWO

WHO IS LIVING?

2.1) Q. Is there any real harm if I accept someone still materially conditioned, or in other words, less than completely Krishna conscious, acting as my eternal preceptor guru?

A. As a "living guru" from the West coast admitted in a position paper to the rest of the GBC in July 1980, "I can now see clearly that by allowing forms of worship and address which were similar to Prabhupada's to be offered to me, I thus cheapened Srila Prabhupada's position. Not only is this a horrible offense to Srila Prabhupada, which weakens the entire Krishna consciousness movement (by cheapening our absolute, perfect authority, Srila Prabhupada) but it also means that I have cheated my disciples."

Srila Prabhupada speaks still more stunningly: "The Sahajiyas (mixed or materially conditioned devotees who imitate great liberated gurus or acharyas) consider the acharyas to be mixed devotees. Thus they clear their path to hell." (Cc. Adi 7.72)

As the above "living guru" admitted, he was mixed or still materially conditioned. And by imitating the pure and spiritually liberated eternal preceptor guru or acharya, he was cheapening the latter's position, making the genuine eternal preceptor guru himself look mixed.

After all, a supposed eternal preceptor guru who is really a neophyte must still be grappling with material conditioning. And so literally all he can do is cheapen the position of the truly self-realized and God realized eternal preceptor guru.

The aspirant feels compelled to think, "Look at that. My supposedly liberated eternal preceptor guru is still battling some kind of material conditioning, some impurity. He's mixed. So who knows? Maybe the great, liberated, pure eternal preceptor guru, who founded this movement, could also be mixed."

A perfect formula for faithlessness. "My supposedly pure, liberated eternal preceptor guru is mixed_so the truly pure, liberated guru might be an impossibility, a myth. And the pure, liberating, transcendent Lord, another myth."

2.2) Q. Nonetheless, a number of apparent Krishna followers recommend that the aspirant worship a new "living guru." Why?

A. These followers seem to have forgotten the sharp distinction Srila Prabhupada asks them to draw between the liberated soul and the conditioned soul. As Srila Prabhupada points out, "Presently people are so fallen that they cannot distinguish between a liberated soul and a conditioned soul. A conditioned soul is hampered by four defects he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to be illusioned, he has the tendency to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect. Consequently, we have to take direction from liberated persons." (SB 4.18.5)

Srila Prabhupada explains, "Perfection is something totally different from what we find in the material world. Perfection means there is no mistake, no illusion, no cheating, no imperfection." (TLK p.198)

"Unless one can find a person transcendental to the four basic defects," Srila Prabhupada cautions, "one should not accept advice and become a victim of material condition. The best process is to take advice and instructions of Sri Krishna or His bona fide representatives. In this way one can become happy in this life and the next." (SB 5.14.26)

As Srila Prabhupada reminds us, "A conditioned soul cannot deliver another conditioned soul. Only Krishna, or his bona fide representative, can deliver him. (NOD p.79)

2.3) Q. But even though someone follows a guru who is still materially conditioned, shouldn't we let the follower worship that guru as liberated and spiritually pure? Why break the followers' faith_ isn't it true that "Guru is one"?

A. Srila Prabhupada remarks, "If one tries to mingle the worship of yogamaya (the pure spiritual reality) with mahamaya (material illusion), considering them one and the same, he does not show very high intelligence. The idea that everything is one is indulged in by those with less brain substance. Fools and rascals say that the worship of yogamaya and mahamaya is the same. This conclusion is simply the result of mental speculation, and it has no practical effect." (Cc. ML 8.90)

"Intermingling the spiritual with the material causes one to look on transcendence as material and mundane as spiritual. This is all due to a poor fund of knowledge." (Cc. ML 16.72)

The "living guru" advocates permit, indeed they may vehemently insist, that the aspirants think of a materially still conditioned person as an eternally liberated preceptor guru. So, in trying to mingle the worship of Srila Prabhupada (the pure spiritual reality) with the worship of those who are partly, or sometimes very blatantly, of the material illusion, the "living gurus" advocates betray their actual level of intelligence.

Srila Prabhupada explains in the Caitanya Caritamrta (24.330), why the spiritual master is worshipped as good as God: "The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service...When one has attained the topmost perfection of maha-bhagavata, he is to be accepted as a guru and worshiped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead."

2.4) Q. But in the Vedic scriptures, don't we find examples of liberated souls who seem to display material conditioning?

A. Seeming and being are, of course, two different things. As we are aware, the Vedic scriptures sing of the liberated eternal preceptor guru's character, his spiritual purity.

One the other hand, the "living gurus," fallen early into embarrassing manifestations of material conditioning or impurity, have strained to explain it all away by singing of the eternal preceptor's alleged character lapses.

For example, in their August 1980 GBC report, in an attempt to explain some deviant behaviors of some of the "living gurus" their advocates alleged, "Even Bhishmadeva, who was one of the great Mahajanas or authorities in understanding Krishna consciousness, was affected by this materialistic association (of women and money). If even Bhishmadeva can be affected by materialistic association, then what to speak of ourselves?"

Lest we be misled, Srila Prabhupada certifies Bhishma's absolutely liberated status, "Sri Bhishmadeva is a great devotee of the Lord in the relation of servitorship (an eternally pure relationship with God)." (SB 1.9.34)

"As a Mahajana or authority he was on the level of Brahma, Narada and Shiva, although he was a human being. Qualification on a par with the great demigods is possible only by attainment of spiritual perfection." (SB 1.9.34)

The 1980 G.B.C. report continued: "There are examples in the Srimad Bhagavatam of great devotees having difficulties... Lord Brahma was affected by sex attraction for his daughter." (!)

But Srila Prabhupada establishes Lord Brahma's liberated and pure status: "This extraordinary immorality on the part of Lord Brahma was heard to have occurred in some particular kalpa (epoch), but it could not have happened in the kalpa in which Brahma heard directly from the Lord the four essential verses of Srimad Bhagavatam, because the Lord benedicted Brahma, after giving him lessons on the Bhagavatam, that he would never be bewildered in any kalpa whatsoever. This indicates that before the hearing of Srimad Bhagavatam he might have fallen victim to such sensuality, but after hearing Srimad Bhagavatam directly from the Lord there was no possibility of such failures." (SB 3.12.28)

When did Lord Brahma experience some apparent sex attraction? Before hearing the essential Bhagavatam verses. Yet the GBC failed entirely to mention that Lord Brahma's illusion had occurred before he heard the Bhagavatam verses. The GBC implies, quite unfairly, that Brahma's illusion occurred after he had heard the Bhagavatam and had become a liberated eternal preceptor guru.

Srila Prabhupada further explains, with brilliant clarity, the nature of Lord Brahma's position in a letter, dated 23rd of March 1969, to Himavati devi dasi: "There are many other stories also, but such apparent falling is without any influence to very, very advanced devotees. A neophyte should always be careful. One should not discuss about such great devotee's apparent fall-down. Just like one should not discuss about the sun who evaporates urine from the earth; it is possible for the sun to do it, and still remains the sun, but for ordinary man if he lives in a filthy place he will be infected. So Lord Shiva or Lord Brahma, they are highly elevated devotees, and we should not try to criticize about their behavior even though it appears against the rules.

"...So far Lord Brahma and his attraction for his daughter; this illustration should be taken by conditioned souls, that even a person like Brahma is sometimes victimized, how much careful we should be. Not that even Brahma was enticed, so we shall become enticed more and more. This is an example set for us by great devotees."

It is thus clear that a progressing candidate on the path of devotional service must use the greatest caution while analyzing the exalted position of Brahma and other Mahajanas.

The GBC also claimed about another exalted liberated devotee, "Dhruva maharaja became overwhelmed by anger at the yakshas for killing his brother."

Srila Prabhupada clarifies, "Dhruva Maharaja was a liberated soul, and actually he was not angry with anyone, but because he was a ruler, it was his duty to become angry for some time in order to keep the law and order of the state." (SB 4.11.13)

This "living guru" tactic of devaluing the great liberated devotees has continued in an expanding pattern throughout the years. For instance, the GBC's "living guru" author, who wrote the "Guru Reform Notebook" says on page 15, "On studying Dhruva Maharaja's case, I do not see at first how it applies to me and my GBC guru Godbrothers. We didn't pursue an obvious material desire as did Dhruva..." In short, the living guru author tries to paint the GBC's guru project, with all of its odious degradations, sectarian violence, and so on, as somehow higher than a factual pure devotee.

Srila Prabhupada writes, "Dhruva Maharaja was a maha-bhagavata, or a first class pure devotee..." (SB 4.12.8)

"It is our duty to remember always that in comparison to Dhruva Maharaja, we are very insignificant. We cannot do anything like what Dhruva Maharaja did for self realization, because we are absolutely incompetent to execute such service." (SB 4.8.73)

And "By associating constantly with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in his heart, Dhruva Maharaja naturally became equal to the greatest, Brahman, by His association and thus he became the heaviest, and the entire universe trembled." (SB 4.8.78)

The 1980 G.B.C. report even chides Arjuna, for outright "losing sight of Krishna": "Arjuna had difficulties in the beginning of the battle of Kuruksetra, but it was due to his losing sight of Krishna, not because of his accepting a superior position to Krishna. It was Arjuna's duty to accept the Supreme Lord as his chariot driver in his fight against Duryodhana's forces. Similarly, it is the duty of ISKCON's initiating gurus to sit on their Vyasasanas (high seats meant for pure devotees) and defeat the ignorance of the age by their strong preaching. Some of our men may have difficulties, but their problems are due to their having lost sight of Krishna for the moment, not due to sitting on a Vyasasana." The GBC's rather boldly compare the abominable illicit activities manifest in the "living guru" project to the so-called illusions of Krishna's eternally pure associate.

As recently as 7 January 1990, while giving a Bhagavatam class, prior to a temple president's meeting on the so-called guru issue, a "living guru" based in east India, (also one of the coauthors of the August 1980 GBC report) alleged that sometimes, for a few minutes, great eternally liberated guru devotees such as Bhishma and Arjuna fall under Mahamaya, the Lord's deluding energy, which covers those who are envious of the Lord.

Yet Srila Prabhupada has very different things to say: "Arjuna conquered both sleep and ignorance because of his friendship with Krishna. As a great devotee of Krishna, Arjuna could not forget Krishna even for a moment, because that is the nature of a devotee. Either in waking or sleeping, a devotee of the Lord can never be free of thinking of Krishna's name, form, qualities, and pastimes. Thus a devotee of Krishna can conquer both sleep and ignorance simply by thinking of Krishna constantly. That is called Krishna consciousness." (Bhagavad-gita As It Is 1.24)

And Srila Prabhupada also writes of Arjuna, "His intelligence could not be polluted at any time, because he was a devotee and constant companion of the Lord, as is clear in the fourth chapter of Bhagavad-gita. Apparently Arjuna's intelligence became polluted because otherwise there would not have been a chance to deliver the teachings of Bhagavad Gita for the good of all polluted conditioned souls engaged in material bondage by the conception of the false material body..." (SB 1.9.36)

Srila Prabhupada further illuminates Arjuna's awesome liberated status: "Although Arjuna is with Krishna in innumerable different material universes at one time, still there is only one spirit soul who is Arjuna. This spiritual soul expands into many different bodies, and thus you can understand that there are also incarnations of devotees as well as incarnation of Krishna. This is the power of the spirit soul, that it is unlimited. Such conception cannot be understood while one is in the conditioned state." (Letter, 12 December 1968)

Further the concept that a pure devotee (fully realized) may forget Krishna, even for a moment, is not supported by Srila Prabhupada and the previous acharyas. "As indicated by the word satatam and nityasah, which mean 'always,' 'regularly,' or 'every day,' a pure devotee constantly remembers Krishna and meditates upon Him....A pure devotee cannot forget the Supreme Lord for a moment, and similarly the Supreme Lord cannot forget His pure devotee for a moment." (Bhagavad-gita As It Is 8.14)

The author of the "Guru Reform Notebook" (pages 24-25) alleges that great liberated gurus and even the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself may also be great offenders, while he stretches even further the attempts to "explain away" the many discrepancies manifested in the GBC's "living guru" project: "Examples of great persons who considered themselves great offenders:

1. Lord Balarama, after killing Romaharshana Suta.

2. Parasurama, after killing the kshatriyas.
3. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, who refused to take mango, saying, 'No, I am an offender.'
4. Srila Prabhupada, who begged forgiveness in his last days for offending his Godbrothers.
5. Narottama dasa and Bhaktivinoda Thakura, who lament in their songs not exactly for having committed offenses, but for wasting their lives in material life."

And how do we know that the great, liberated eternal preceptor gurus never become materially conditioned? Because the Vedic literature and Prabhupada's personal example confirm it.

How do we know that the "living gurus" are conditioned souls unqualified to hold the post of eternal preceptor gurus? Because, as seen above, they exhibit conditioned defects. They incorrectly misinterpret the Vedic scriptures by their imperfect senses. Some of them even boast that Krishna's pure parampara gurus, such as the "living guru" project's members, "make mistakes all the time."

Then they amalgamate those conditioned defects into larger illusions which they forward as position papers, (GBC philosophical reports) and such illusions are supposed to be "the absolute truth." This means that they are then exhibiting the cheating propensity. Finally, as described above, they shamelessly and unauthorizedly promote all their material defects as the qualifications of the great acharyas and Mahajanas.

Very dangerously, the "living gurus" portray the completely Krishna conscious eternal preceptor gurus as faulty, materially affected, mixed devotees. So again, Srila Prabhupada observes the great danger of this deviant philosophy: mixing the contaminated with the pure in Cc. Adi-Lila 7.72: "thus they clear their path to hell."

Srila Prabhupada clarifies the reasons for the false criticisms towards real acharyas: "Influenced by an envious temperament and dissatisfied because of an attitude of sense gratification, mundaners criticize a real acharya. In fact, however, a bona fide acharya is nondifferent from the Personality of Godhead, and therefore to envy such an acharya is to envy the Personality of Godhead Himself. This will produce an effect subversive to transcendental realization..." (Cc. Adi 1.46)

And he remarks in Sri Isopanisad, Mantra twelve, of the potential consequences of misleading innocent people by falsely posing as an eternal guru, "By a false display of religious sentiments, they present a show of devotional service while indulging in all sorts of immoral activities. In this way they pass as spiritual masters and devotees of God. Such violators of religious principles have no respect for the

authoritative acharyas, the holy teachers in the strict disciplic succession. To mislead the people in general, they themselves become so-called acharyas, but they do not even follow the principles of the acharyas.

"These rogues are the most dangerous elements in human society. Because there is no religious government, they escape punishment by the law of the state. They cannot however, escape the law of the Supreme, who has clearly stated in Bhagavad-gita (16. 19-20) that envious demons in the garb of religious propagandists shall be thrown into the darkest regions of hell. Sri Isopanisad confirms that these pseudo-religionists are headed toward the most obnoxious place in the universe after the completion of their spiritual master business, which they conduct simply for sense gratification."

Srila Prabhupada's spiritual master Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, warned, in 1916 in a book titled Prakrita rasa sata dushani. "Mahajana pathe dosa kabhu guru deya na. The genuine spiritual master never finds fault with the devotional path shown by the great devotees (mahajanas)." Further he states, "guru mahajana vakye bheda kabhu haya na. There can never be any difference between the explanations of the bona fide spiritual master and the teachings of the great devotees (mahajanas)."

Thus, several fundamental of pillars of "living guru" projects since time immemorial are: 1) That pure devotees forget Krishna, for a moment or longer. 2) That the Personality of Godhead, Lord Balarama, Parasurama, and so on, may have committed errors or may be considered as offenders. 3) The maha-bhagavata acharyas, even including Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura or Srila Prabhupada himself, may have made been in illusion, committed mistakes, misrepresented things or may have even been offenders. All of these conceptions, as verbalized by the GBCs, are considered as forbidden by Srila Prabhupada.

2.5) Q. But even if, as has happened, a devotee's so-called eternal preceptor initiating guru falls down, can't that devotee follow the G.B.C. policy and take a new initiating guru?

A. As Srila Prabhupada writes, "a devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master, because acceptance of more than one is always forbidden. There is no limit, however, to the number of instructing spiritual masters one may accept. Generally a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science (as Srila Prabhupada does through His books and tapes) becomes his initiating spiritual master later on." (Cc. Adi 1.35)

The hard facts tell us that many of the "living guru" project's so called initiating gurus can scarcely deliver themselves, what to speak of others. Yet after inevitable, heart-wrenching and sometimes dangerously fanatical "guru falldowns," and subsequent cover-ups, the "living guru" project impels new devotees to accept a second or a third and in some cases a fourth, so-called eternal initiating guru. All

this in clear violation of Srila Prabhupada's order: "Acceptance of more than one initiating spiritual master is always forbidden."

On the other hand, "There is no limit. However, to the number of instructing spiritual masters one may accept." Such instructing spiritual masters (sadhus: lay preachers, or shiksha gurus: elevated priests) may therefore be situated on many diverse levels of realization. As for "the spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science," this is clearly Srila Prabhupada, whose gracious and gargantuan library of audio and video cassettes and books instruct millions of people each day.

It should be noted that even among the followers of Srila Prabhupada there are divergences of opinion on the issue of reinitiation.

1) First initiation invalid. That a guru or preceptor who was never appointed in the first place, who is self-appointed or appointed by deviants, who has engaged in or acquiesced to, covered up or supported deviant philosophy and even sinful activity, does not have the power or spiritual authority to give an actual bona fide initiation (diksha). As such the initiates are really noninitiated. As such, many of these initiates are now considering themselves to be noninitiated formally, but still followers of Srila Prabhupada. Thus the question for many of these devotees is not "reinitiation" but a bona fide first initiation.

2) First initiation valid, but needs reconfirming. Most of the current living gurus and GBC hold the theory that the current gurus were originally appointed or selected directly by Prabhupada as diksha gurus. Thus, the initiations they gave (regardless of their behavior at the time of initiation) were actually "bona fide initiations." Thus according to their own GBC logic, the question of obtaining a second guru is inapplicable since Prabhupada forbids the acceptance of more than one initiating guru. (Cc Adi Ch. 1)

3) The reality. Srila Prabhupada's statements and written orders, especially in his last months, are that official initiation ceremony, in his society, is to be conducted through the officiating acharya system. This is an interim system where the ceremony of initiation could continue, for the foreseeable future, until such time as more fully realized souls appeared.

To the extent that these officiating deputies (monitors, agents, representatives, preachers, priests, ritviks) follow Srila Prabhupada's teachings and instructions purely, they can also be considered as bona fide "living representatives of the parampara." Just as Srila Prabhupada wrote to one uninitiated woman in 1968, her preaching was a bona fide representation of the disciplic succession and him.

But one cannot imitate the maha-bhagavata, Srila Prabhupada. Thus a Vaishnava devotee may be considered and authorized agent or bona fide representative of the actual fully realized eternal preceptor guru, Srila Prabhupada. The new candidate

thus has a bona fide guru, a fully Krishna conscious acharya_Srila Prabhupada, represented by a sincere "living preacher" or deputy.

Thus Srila Prabhupada's choice of monitors, officiators, ritviks, or "deputies" (18th of October 1977) is a perfect arrangement to carry on the order of the pure devotee Srila Prabhupada. He would remain the central focus or the maha-bhagavata, fully realized pure devotee. This arrangement would have eliminated the needless confusion generated by the repeated imitation of the maha-bhagavata.

2.6) Q. The "living guru" project still advises the aspirant to accept their appointed people as eternal preceptor gurus, even though they display symptoms of being still materially conditioned? Does Srila Prabhupada sanction this arrangement?

A. Srila Prabhupada: "When a person has attained the topmost position of maha-bhagavata, he is to be accepted a guru and worshiped like Hari. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of Guru." (Cc. Madhya Lila 24.330)

2.7) Q. But doesn't Srila Prabhupada recommend that in a crisis, such as following the disappearance of the completely Krishna conscious eternal preceptor guru, we may accept as our eternal preceptor guru someone who is less than completely Krishna conscious?

A. In a word, no. "In this verse (N.O.I. text 5 pages 56-57) Srila Rupa Goswami advises that the devotee must be intelligent enough to distinguish between the Kanistha-adhikari (neophyte), Madhyama-adhikari (intermediate), and Uttama-adhikari (fully liberated, completely Krishna conscious). The devotee should also know his own position and should not try to imitate a devotee situated on a higher platform. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has given some practical hints to the effect that an Uttama adhikari can be recognized by his ability to convert many fallen souls to Vaishnavism. One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of Uttama Adhikari. A neophyte Vaishnava or a Vaishnava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an Uttama-Adhikari as a spiritual master."

But after 1977, new disciples (regardless how careful) supposedly could not accept the Uttama-Adhikari, Srila Prabhupada, as their spiritual master. The "living guru" project was advancing the idea that for practical purposes, Srila Prabhupada was dead, and that we needed one of their appointed "living gurus".

To "maintain the pure, eternal disciplic succession," the "living guru" project would provide a physically present person for new disciples to worship. So despite Srila Prabhupada's clear warnings, new disciples would now have to accept as their eternal preceptor guru a nonrealized neophyte. They would have to worship that

neophyte as if he were an Uttama-adhikari. And that neophyte "living guru" would have to imitate an Uttama adhikari (Srila Prabhupada). At his peril.

2.8) Q. But in the January 1978 "Remembering Srila Prabhupada" issue of "Back To Godhead," an editorial assures us that "sincere (not perfected) disciples may still act as gurus to maintain the eternal parampara (disciplic succession)." Isn't this true?

A. True_in a limited sense. A sincere neophyte disciple may act as a religious teacher, called an instructing (shiksha) guru or as a sadhu, or saintly inclined person. They may teach still newer adherents the discipline of the succession, which they received from the completely Krishna conscious eternal preceptor guru.

In the long history of the guru succession there have been large time gaps between successors. For example as much as a century elapsed between Narottama dasa Thakura and Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura.

What we have to remember is that the "eternal disciplic succession" is one of successive discipline, not of successive nonrealized persons, who are merely imitating the fully liberated preceptor guru. Thus, the actual role of a neophyte preacher in "maintaining the disciplic succession" is his surrendered mood of humble service to their genuine, completely Krishna conscious eternal preceptor guru.

Srila Prabhupada clearly explains the correct understanding of the so called "gaps in the disciplic succession" in a letter to his disciple, Dayananda Prabhu, in 1968: "... regarding the parampara system, there is nothing to wonder for big gaps. We find in the Bhagavad-gita that the Gita was taught to the Sun-god, some millions of years ago, but Krishna has mentioned only three names in this parampara_namely Vivasvan, Manu, and Iksvaku; and so these gaps do not hamper our understanding of the parampara system. We have to pick up the prominent acharyas, and follow from Him. There are many branches also from the parampara system, and it is not possible to record all the branches and subbranches in the disciplic succession. We have to pick up from the authority of the acharya in whatever sampradaya we belong to..."

Let us ponder. If a nonrealized neophyte disciple were sincere and humble, would he let others (even a tiny following) falsely see him as a fully realized eternal preceptor guru?

Or would he heed the actual instruction of the eternal guru's discipline: "One should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or maha-bhagavata without being self realized, for by such imitation, one will eventually become degraded." (N.O.I. Page 58)

2.9) Q. But didn't the GBC's controversial 1978 "living guide" reassure the "living gurus," to "wear the (guru's) uniform, and the uniform will show what to do?"

A. Yes. The 1978 GBC report stated that it was made "In Consultation With Higher Authorities." The GBC never clearly identified who these plural "authorities" were. When did Prabhupada authorize his leaders to go to "higher authorities"? But they maintained close contact with one of the controversial leaders of the Gaudiya Matha, who was criticized by Prabhupada, as was the entire institution. The GBC borrowed_paragraph after paragraph_from their series of talks (made in March of 1978) with the advisor_ wherein the G.B.C.'s controversial Gaudiya Matha guide says:

"You see, when the second world war broke out, in Dalhousie square in Calcutta, there was a popular government poster. A military uniform was painted on the wall. Beneath it was a saying, 'Just wear this uniform, and the uniform will show you what you must do.' So, when a sincere man has taken a particular charge, he will somehow find out what are the duties of his post. He is sincere. And God will help. God helps those who help themselves. You have taken the charge, and that charge has not come only as a chance, but there is some underground link. Then if you try to go on, help will come to you. He is not a cheat.

He will come to help you with all his might, saying, 'Do this. I'm helping; I am at your back.' When we are all sincere, things will happen like this."

Notwithstanding this mystic wishfulness, Srila Prabhupada cautions, as we have seen, "One should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or mahabhagavata without being self-realized, for by such imitation one will eventually become degraded." (N.O.I. page 58)

And in numerous conversations and letters, such as one dated 28 April 1974, Srila Prabhupada had cautioned a leading GBC man in particular, that this supposed guide had disturbed the entire Gaudiya Matha, the mission of Srila Prabhupada's own spiritual master, by promoting nonrealized neophytes as eternal preceptor gurus: Prabhupada: "So S...Maharaja and his two associate gentlemen unauthorizedly selected one acharya, who later proved to be a failure. The result is that now everyone is claiming to be acharya, even though they may be Kanistha-adhikari with no ability to preach. In some camps, the acharya is being changed three times a year. Therefore," Srila Prabhupada begged, "We may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp."

Srila Prabhupada further admonished, "Actually amongst my Godbrothers, no one is qualified to become acharya. So it is better not to mix with my Godbrothers very intimately, because instead of inspiring our students and disciples, they may sometimes pollute them... They cannot help us in our movement, but they are very competent to harm our natural progress."

In a similar letter dated 9 November 1975, Srila Prabhupada ordered, "All my disciples should avoid all of my Godbrothers. They should not have any dealings with them nor even correspondence, nor should we give them any of my books, nor

should we purchase any of their books, neither should you visit any of their temples. Please avoid them."

But incredible as it may seem, immediately after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, his leading GBC men started almost immediately to intimately mix with the one Godbrother they had been warned about the most.

History was not only about to repeat itself, but a key player from the past had now been added to the cast. The "Gaudiya Matha debacle" was soon to become the "ISKCON debacle." How this "advisor" had helped drive the Gaudiya Matha off the rails was recalled by Srila Prabhupada in the 10 April 1974 letter, "He (Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura founder of the Gaudiya Matha) never recommended anyone to be acharya of the Gaudiya Matha, but S...Maharaja is responsible for disobeying this order of guru maharaja, and he and two others who are already dead, unnecessarily thought that there must be one acharya.

"If guru maharaja could have seen someone who was qualified at the time to be acharya, he would have mentioned. Because on the night he passed away he talked of so many things, but he never mentioned an acharya."

But after Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura's disappearance this controversial guide and other associates had offered the same identical mystic promptings to Ananta Vasudeva, the first of the Gaudiya Matha's doomed "living gurus." And now the same promptings were delivered to the first eleven of ISKCON's "living gurus". And so, like the post 1936s, the 1980s would become an era of disruption, deviation, and even death. The genuine eternal preceptor guru_ all but forgotten.

2.10) Q. In essence, why should we seek out an eternal preceptor guru who is fully liberated, free of all material conditioning?

A. The spiritually liberated eternal preceptor guru can take us to the highest levels of devotional service, whereas the non-liberated "living guru" may even fail to rise to these levels himself.

As Srila Prabhupada writes, "The Lord reveals His identity gradually to one who has unflinching faith, both in the spiritual master and the Lord. After this, the devotee is endowed with mystic opulences, which are eight in number. And above all, the devotee is accepted in the confidential entourage of the Lord through the agency of the spiritual master." (SB 1.5.39.)

How can we be "accepted in the confidential entourage of the Lord and entrusted with specific service of the Lord"? "Through the agency of the spiritual master." In other words, we have to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada, the liberated, completely self realized and Krishna conscious eternal preceptor guru, who himself is in that confidential entourage of Lord Krishna.

In San Francisco, in 1975, a reporter asked Srila Prabhupada who would succeed him.

Reporter: "What will happen to the movement in the United States when you die?"

Prabhupada: "I will never die."

Devotees: "Jaya. (Victory) Haribol!"

Prabhupada: "I shall live from my books and you will utilize."

Why didn't Prabhupada say he would live through his soon to be appointed living guru representatives? The connection to a devotee who is in the Lord's confidential entourage is essential. He can award the eight mystic opulences, and above all, he can claim back the fallen souls and bring them into the spiritual kingdom of God. Srila Prabhupada foretold that he would live on perpetually_in His books, to guide souls back into the confidential entourage of the Lord.

For their part, many of the GBC's so-called "living gurus" have at times entered the entourage of impersonal New Age fad movements, narcotic and psychedelic drugs, illicit sex, homosexual activities, contracting AIDS, pedophilia, eating meat, smoking cigarettes, drinking beer, stealing, embezzling, physically harming dissidents, and so forth. Some would have innocent aspirants become "eternally connected" to such persons. But why? Aren't such persons obstructing the aspirants' connection to Srila Prabhupada, their liberated, completely Krishna conscious eternal preceptor guru? So we can perhaps sense why Srila Prabhupada displays such disdain for the notion of the "living" nonrealized guru.

2.11.) Q. But can't any number of devotees become gurus?

A. Yes, in a loose sense, but in the strictest sense, no. The "living guru" project smooths over the distinction between the loose sense of guru and the strict. "There are three classes of devotees," writes Srila Prabhupada in Cc. Madhya Lila 24.330, "and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class."

"Therefore the conclusion is that a spiritual master who is one hundred per cent Krishna conscious is the bona fide spiritual master." (Bhagavad-gita 2.8.)

"Since one cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee. Such a spiritual master is none other than Krishna Himself." (Cc. Adi Lila 1.58)

"The Guru speaks as Krishna dictates from within. Thus it is not he that he is personally speaking. When a pure devotee or spiritual master speaks, what he says should be accepted as having been directly spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the parampara system." (Cc. Antya Lila 5.71)

"When a pure devotee speaks, he speaks perfectly. How is this? His speech is managed by Krishna Himself within the heart." (Cc. Madhya Lila 8.200)

2.12) Q. *Let's not be overly idealistic. We need gurus, but inevitably, as recent history has shown, sometimes a reasonably good guru can become a bad guru. Isn't that right?*

A. Srila Prabhupada: "Well, if he is bad, how can he become guru? (Laughter) How can iron become gold? Actually, a guru cannot be bad, for if someone is bad, he cannot be a guru. You cannot say 'bad guru.' That is a contradiction..."

"A guru cannot be bad. There is no question of a bad guru, any more than a red guru or a white guru. Guru means 'genuine guru.'" (Science of Self-realization, "Saints and Swindlers")

Before 1977_ in the presence of the bona fide guru, Srila Prabhupada_ there was no question of a "bad guru." Or if there was one, such a silly concoction would create about a shower of laughter. But now the "living guru" project has created thousands of unanswered questions about their "bad gurus." And no one is laughing. Indeed, the "living guru" project will have one shunned, excommunicated, even threatened for the "sin" of repeating Prabhupada's clear instruction "there is no question of a bad guru."

2.13) Q. *But even if he is (still) conditioned, don't we need a "living guru" _someone we can experience directly through our senses, someone we can see and touch to talk to and listen to?*

A. Let us consider the following exchange between Srila Prabhupada and some of his disciples, in Seattle, on the 2nd October 1968.

Madhudvisa: "Is there any way for a Christian to...without the help of a spiritual master...to reach the spiritual sky through believing in the words of Jesus Christ and trying to follow his teachings?"

Prabhupada: "I don't follow."

Tamal Krishna: "Can a Christian in this age, without a spiritual master, but by reading the Bible and following Jesus' words, reach the..."

Prabhupada: "When you read Bible, you follow spiritual master. How can you say 'without?' As soon as you read Bible, that means you are following the instruction of Lord Jesus Christ, that means you are following spiritual master. So where is the opportunity of being without spiritual master?"

Madhudvisa: "I was referring to a living spiritual master..."

Prabhupada: "Spiritual master is not the question of..."

Spiritual master is eternal. Spiritual master is eternal. So your question is 'without spiritual master.' Without spiritual master you cannot be, at any stage of your life. You may accept this spiritual master or that spiritual master. That is a different thing. But you have to accept. As you say that "by reading Bible," when you read Bible that means you are following the spiritual master represented by some priest or some clergyman in the line of Lord Jesus Christ. So any case, you have to follow a spiritual master. There cannot be the question without spiritual master. Is that clear?"

Madhudvisa: "I mean like we couldn't understand the teachings of Bhagavad-gita without your help, without your presentation."

Prabhupada: "Similarly you have to understand Bible with the help of the priest in the church."

So the Vedic literatures and Srila Prabhupada provide a simple formula, one follows: Guru (the pure devotee), sadhu (devotees of the guru) and sastra (scriptures). To approach our eternal guru, we can get help from the physically present devotees (sadhus). More advanced devotees may act as teachers or priests, who represent the eternal guru (Srila Prabhupada). The "living devotees" and the scriptures combine to help us focus on the eternal preceptor guru.

Although a devotee-sadhu (even after attaining the madhyama-adhikary or intermediate platform of devotional service) may possibly fall down, the true eternal preceptor guru can never fall down. He is eternally liberated. He transcends the falldown-and-reform treadmill of any "living guru" project.

Prabhupada clearly contrasts the position of the fully realized eternal guru, and the GBC's artificial "living parampara gurus": "There is no possibility that a first class devotee will fall down, even though he may mix with nondevotees to preach." (Cc. Madhya Lila 22.71)

In 1971 in Delhi, a devotee asked Srila Prabhupada whether_ after two thousand years_ Christ is still responsible for the sins of his modern day followers. Srila Prabhupada replied, "Yes. Provided they follow his instructions." So Christ remains the eternal preceptor guru for the Christians. They do not need any concocted or experimental "guru" project, neither does Srila Prabhupada's movement.

2.14) Q. But once the GBC appoints a guru, doesn't he become the most confidential servant of Radha and Krishna, the sum total of all the demigods, and the object of worship for Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma?

A. Nowhere does Srila Prabhupada indicate that within a few short years one can make the transition from "Bhakta Lawrence" to the "sum total of all the demigods." Rather, Srila Prabhupada describes this kind of mentality as prakrita sahajiya, or taking things very cheaply.

Nor can a committee of mortal men force their "appointed pure devotee" concoctions upon the Lord, Who alone provides us with the fully liberated and completely Krishna conscious eternal preceptor guru. In Caitanya Caritamrta, Adi Lila 1.46, Srila Prabhupada writes, "Only out of His immense compassion does the Personality of Godhead reveal Himself as the spiritual master." In short, the Lord_not some Governing Body certification committee_establishes who is a fully realized pure devotee guru.

And in a lecture on the Nectar of Devotion, in Vrindavana, on the 11th of November 1972, Srila Prabhupada said of the guru, "Krishna has appointed him (the guru) to train them (his disciples)"

The guru is appointed by Krishna. Prabhupada would say we cannot "rubber stamp" someone as a guru. This is not the function of some managerial committee. When a committee contrives to artificially create a genuine, liberated, completely Krishna conscious eternal preceptor guru, they are playing God. But the Lord Himself is the genuine guru's life, potency and "appointment" authority. And no one else can artificially "bring to life" or create such exalted spiritual "living guru" realization, anymore than a scientist can create living consciousness.

In 1976, at Mayapura, one sannyasi asked Prabhupada why the Gaudiya Matha failed? Prabhupada replied : "Because they tried to make a perfect man. You cannot make a perfect man." Thus Srila Prabhupada did not approve one of the fundamental pillars of the experimental guru project.

2.15) Q. The GBC has appointed a "guru research committee" to study the nature of the bona fide guru. Why don't we simply allow things to go on, while waiting patiently for that committee's determinations?

A. That would be like allowing bungling brain surgeons to go on opening heads, while we waited patiently for a medical panel to ponder the topic, "What is the nature of the bona fide brain surgeon?"

Prabhupada explains that the actual authoritative siddhanta of Krishna consciousness and the actual exalted position of the Bona fide guru, is not understood through research work.

"At the end of every chapter, the author admits the value of the disciplic succession. He never claims to have written this transcendental literature by carrying out research work...." (Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-Lila 8.312)

2.16) Q. Hasn't the GBC acted with great vigilance in removing their "bad gurus"?

A. As Srila Prabhupada asks, "If he is bad, how can he be a guru?" In other words "bad gurus" is a whimsical conundrum. But the GBC disagrees. In their 1987 resolutions, for example, the GBC's "guru research committee" contends that a guru may be not only simply bad, he might be a full fledged demon!

Here are some examples of the GBC's convoluted logic from their 1987 position paper:

"#64. That if a guru is engaged in sense gratification, violating either one or more of the regulative principles, but there is hope that he can be rectified, then his disciples should allow time for rectification to take place and they should take shelter of Srila Prabhupada and senior Vaishnavas as siksha-gurus."

Note: Here the GBC very mercifully allows us to temporarily worship the fully realized bona fide guru (Srila Prabhupada), until they can shuffle us around to another one of their "eternal living gurus." Simultaneously we are instructed that parampara gurus may become bewildered and violate the basic Krishna conscious regulations.

"#65 That if a guru has become hopelessly entangled in sense gratification, and it has been shown either by observation or from his own admissions that he has been regularly violating the regulative principles of Krishna consciousness and that there is virtually no hope for rectification, then the disciple should reject him and may accept reinitiation."

The reinitiation process, concocted by the GBC, instructs us that a devotee is allowed to accept more than one initiating guru. Some GBC followers have had three GBC gurus are being urged to get a fourth "initiating guru." But Srila Prabhupada warns, "A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master, because in the scriptures acceptance of more than one is always forbidden." (Cc. Adi Lila 1.35)

Note: How can we insist that people accept more and more initiating gurus, and make legislation enforcing this idea, when Srila Prabhupada says "acceptance of more than one initiating guru is always forbidden"?

"#66. That if the spiritual master takes on demoniac qualities and becomes inimical to ISKCON, he should be rejected and the disciple may take reinitiation." Note: There is not even one single historical example of a bona fide guru becoming a demon and an historical example in the bona fide scriptures of the GBC's reinitiation concoction.

"#67. That if it is ascertained either by the admission of the guru or through irrefutably reliable witnesses that the guru was fallen at the time of giving initiation, then the disciple has a legitimate reason to reject him and take reinitiation.

"#68. That there should not be any public worship of a guru who is suspended." Note: Here the GBC claims that a guru may be suspended something like a corrupt politician. Nowhere do they describe the scriptural basis of their research team's findings for such an assertion.

"#69. That disciples of a suspended guru, while performing aratrika (worship) to the deities should offer the various articles through Srila Prabhupada to the disciplic succession.

"#70. That while offering obeisances in a public place, the disciples of a suspended guru should recite Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantras aloud and should chant the mantras to the suspended gurus silently or not at all."

But Srila Prabhupada writes, "There is no possibility that a first class devotee will fall down, even though he may mix with nondevotees to preach." (Cc. Madhya Lila 22.71) Any perfected or first class devotee (what to speak of an eternal preceptor Krishna conscious guru) can never fall down. So the GBC as much as admits their "living gurus" are simply not at all qualified to become anyone's eternal preceptor guru.

Additionally, as Srila Prabhupada notes in Cc. Adi-Lila 1.45-46, "The relationship of a disciple with his spiritual master is as good as his relationship with the Supreme Lord... The disciple must look upon him as the manifested representation of Godhead."

How can we have a "fallen, suspended or demoniac" relationship with the Supreme Lord? So no wonder Srila Prabhupada cautions us never to think that a genuine eternal preceptor guru can be a conditioned soul. "One is forbidden to accept the guru or spiritual master as an ordinary man (gurusu nara matih)." (Cc. Antya Lila 5. 71-74)

"One is forbidden to regard the guru as an ordinary human being (gurusu nara matih...naraka sah). The spiritual master, or acharya, is always situated in the spiritual status of life."

Gurusu nara matih yasya vai naraki sah: anyone who thinks that the bona fide guru can be a materially conditioned soul has a mentality that is naraki, or hellish. So we can understand why Srila Prabhupada writes, as already noted: "The sahajiyas... consider the acharyas to be mixed devotees. Thus they clear their path to hell." (Cc. Adi Lila 7.22)

Once again, as we have seen, "One is forbidden to accept the guru or spiritual master as an ordinary human being (gurusu nara matih)... A spiritually advanced person who acts with authority, as the spiritual master, speaks as the Supreme Personality of Godhead dictates from within." (Cc. Antya Lila 5. 71-74)

"If one who is not yet developed imitates such symptoms (of a liberated guru) artificially, he creates chaos in the spiritual life of human society." (Cc. Adi Lila 7.88)

May Lord Krishna and our beloved eternal preceptor guru, Srila Prabhupada, forgive us for having created chaos in human society and in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. By their grace, may we now begin to obey their orders and reemerge out of chaos to order: at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada, the eternal spiritual preceptor of all the members of HIS transcendental movement.

CHAPTER THREE

ETERNALLY LINKING WITH KRISHNA

3.1) Q. How and when does the link between the eternal preceptor guru and the disciple begin?

A. Srila Prabhupada: "The eternal bond between disciple and spiritual master begins from the first day he hears..." (Letter 4 September 1972)

Now, just as before, we can maintain our link, our bond, with Srila Prabhupada by submissively hearing, through his merciful and monumental legacy of books, letters and tapes, and now videos and even a computerized folio, Srila Prabhupada mercifully continues living with us.

3.2) Q. Did Srila Prabhupada perhaps foresee that his movement's leaders would lose sight of his presence and might dissipate the movement by discouraging people from linking up with him? If so, how did Srila Prabhupada plan to continue providing us the opportunity to link up with Him?

A. Again though his books, letters, and tapes. "You have taken the right view of the importance of my books," Srila Prabhupada wrote in a letter on 11 August 1973, to one of his leaders. "Books will remain. That was the view of my guru maharaja, and I have also taken it. Therefore I have started this movement with my books.... The temples will be maintained by my book sales, and if there are no more temples, then the books shall remain." Amazingly, Prabhupada practically predicts that his temples might be closed due to mismanagement, but at least his books would continue existing.

In an interview with a reporter in San Francisco, in 1975, Prabhupada joyfully remarked in reply to a query regarding the status of the movement in the United States after his death...

Reporter: "What will happen to the movement in the United states after you die"?

Prabhupada: "I shall never die."

Devotees: Jaya. (Victory) Hari Bolo.

Prabhupada: I shall live from my books and you will utilize."

And in a conversation on 18th of February 1976, Srila Prabhupada remarked, "After eighty years, no one can expect to live long. My life is almost ended; it is ended. So you have to carry on. And these books will do everything."

Srila Prabhupada explains that the follower's success comes from full faith that the eternal guru is always with him. "But I had full faith, and that is a fact. There are two words, vani and vapuh. Vani means words, and vapuh means this physical body. Vapuh will be finished. This material body. It will be finished. That is the nature. But if we keep to the vani, to the words of the spiritual master, then we remain very fixed up....If you accept Bhagavad-gita as it is, then you should know that Krishna is present before you in His words, in the Bhagavad-gita. This is called spiritual realization... If you keep in touch with the original link, then you are directly hearing Krishna. Similarly, Krishna and Krishna's representative, spiritual master, if you always keep intact, in link with the words and instructions of higher authorities (like Srila Prabhupada), then you are always fresh. This is spiritual understanding..." (Lecture by Srila Prabhupada in Atlanta 75.03.02)

And if the living body is not there, what must the aspirants do? "So although a physical body is not present, the vibration should be accepted as the presence of the spiritual master, vibration. What we have heard from the spiritual master, that is living." (Lecture 13 January 1969)

3.3) Q. The "living guru" project advocates maintain that Srila Prabhupada can no longer give us specific instructions or share loving exchanges with us. Is this true?

A. Srila Prabhupada has a much different view: "So my guru maharaja will be very, very much pleased upon you, and bless you with all benefits. So he wanted this, and it is not....it is not that he is dead and gone. That is not spiritual understanding...he is seeing. I never feel that I am alone." (Lecture 2 March 1975)

"I shall remain your personal guidance, physically present or not physically, as I am getting personal guidance from my guru maharaja" (Srila Prabhupada to Tamal Krishna, 14 July 1977)

**"He lives forever by His Divine instructions, and the follower lives with Him"
(Preface to Srila Prabhupada's 1962 Bhgavatam)**

"Yes I am so glad that your center is doing so well and all the devotees are now appreciating the presence of their spiritual master by following his instructions, although he is no longer physically present. This is the right spirit." (Letter to Karandhara 13 September 1970)

"The service to the spiritual master is essential. If there is no chance to serve the spiritual 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. In the absence, therefore, his words of direction should be the pride of the disciple." (Cc. Adi Lila 1.35)

3.4) Q. And yet, would it not be better in some ways if we could meet our spiritual master Srila Prabhupada, through his physical presence?

A. "Although according to material vision His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada passed away from this material world on the last day of December 1936, I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his vani, his words. There are two ways of transcendental association_ by vani and by vapuh. Vani means the words, and vapuh means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but vani continues to exist eternally. Therefore we must take advantage of the vani not the physical presence. Bhagavad-gita, for example, is the vani of Lord Krishna. Although Krishna was personally present five thousands years ago, and is no longer physically present from a materialistic point of view, Bhagavad-gita continues." (Concluding words Cc. Antya Lila Volume 5)

3.5) Q. Agreed that Lord Krishna and His genuine representative are present through their instructions. But still, how can we equate simply following those instructions with what we usually think of as personal (living) association?

A. Let us consider a condensed portion of a lecture on Bhagavad-gita (4.14) given by Srila Prabhupada on 3 April 1974, in Bombay: "Instead of accepting Krishna, we are accepting some rogue imitation, rogue Krishna. This is our misfortune. But we should not do that. There is Krishna. Here is Krishna, in His words. Krishna is absolute. He is not different from Krishna. The words of Krishna and Krishna there is no difference.

"When you read Bhagavad-gita, if you feel like that, that 'here is Krishna speaking before me,' then your life is successful.

"Krishna is speaking. Actually, it is a fact. It is a fact. It is not that Krishna is no longer here. Five thousand years ago He spoke. Therefore this Bhagavada Gita has become null and void. This is nonsense. Krishna can speak at every moment, at

every second. Premanjana churita bhakti vilocanena santah sadaina hrdayesu vilokayanti. Those who are santas...Therefore it is said here, iti mam yo'bhijanati. Does he say that 'Simply in this age?'

"No. At any time. Iti mam yo' bhijanati. One who understands Krishna at any time, at any place, iti mam yo'bhijanati karmabhir na sa badhyate, he becomes liberated person simply by this understanding that Krishna is the Supreme Lord...because he is speaking like a man, we are thinking that Krishna came and Krishna is now dead, and his instruction is also dead, obsolete.

No, that is not. Krishna is ever-existing, nityo nityanam. We are also ever-existing. We are also ever-existing. We are covered by this material body, but Krishna is not covered by the material body. He comes in His original body.

"So Krishna comes to save us and gives us His instruction so that after His disappearance from this world, people will take advantage of his instruction and make his life perfect...

"But if we misuse our intelligence and do not take advice from Krishna and manufacture so many plans for prosperity, that will all fail"

Like Krishna, the spiritual master is identical with his instructions. Srila Prabhupada's instructions, Srila Prabhupada they are exactly the same. In his instructions Srila Prabhupada IS LIVING. But sad to say, as soon as Srila Prabhupada disappeared, some of his students took the opportunity to introduce the unauthorized principle of the "living guru."

"Whenever an acharya comes," writes Srila Prabhupada, "following the superior orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His representative, he establishes the principles of religion... Unfortunately, when the acharya disappears, rogues and nondevotees take advantage and immediately begin to introduce unauthorized principles in the name of so-called swamis, yogis, philanthropists, welfare workers, and so on...The acharya, the authorized representative of the Supreme Lord, establishes these principles, but when he disappears, things again become disordered. The perfect disciples of the acharya try to relieve the situation by sincerely following the instructions of the spiritual master." (SB 4.28.48)

So whatever we have done up to this point, from now on, we should try to become perfect disciples of Srila Prabhupada. For the foreseeable future, we should "become gurus" in the sense that Lord Chaitanya and Srila Prabhupada plainly intended. We should help our fellow neophytes link up with our beloved, fully self-realized, and perfectly Krishna conscious eternal guru, Srila Prabhupada.

CHAPTER FOUR

GURUS OVERWHELMED?

4.1) Q. When the "living gurus" fall down into grossly sinful activities such as intoxication and illicit sex, doesn't that happen simply as a result of their having taken on so many student's or disciple's karma or sinful reactions?

A. In the Bhagavad-gita (18.66), Lord Krishna reassures us, "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall protect you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."

As the bona fide student progresses towards spiritual realization, sinful reactions affect him less and less. Srila Prabhupada often gave the example that the devotee's karma is reduced just as, when a moving fan is suddenly unplugged, it will spin slower and slower. Soon the fan comes to a complete stop. Similarly, for the bona fide student of Krishna consciousness, sinful reactions will soon come to a complete stop.

In fact, when the student follows the rules and regulations and chants the Hare Krishna maha mantra according to the instructions of the bona fide acharya, his sinful reactions are finished.

But the unfortunate philosophy of the "living guru" project is that after one endeavors to become fully Krishna conscious, and finally becomes a perfected devotee and a guru, one is quite liable to become overwhelmed by sinful reactions all over again. The fallen souls one "tries to save" will overload the preacher with their sins. Gradually the preacher's realization and spiritual standing become completely destroyed, and he may fall down simply because he "tried to preach" about God. If this sounds like a hopeless treadmill, it is.

Perfect downfall? According to the living guru project's logic, we should outright expect that a spiritually perfected person might fall down in a flaming tailspin of materialism. These spiritual tragedies are a natural and not surprising by-product of the Krishna conscious experience, which goes roughly like this:

a) The spiritual aspirant surrenders to Lord Krishna and His bona fide representative, the eternal guru, and so he becomes freed from sinful reactions.

b) The aspirant gradually becomes a realized soul and preaches to the fallen souls about his perfect realization.

c) After preaching and convincing and initiating others, the perfectly realized guru becomes "overwhelmed by sins of his flock," and he falls from Krishna consciousness into sordid illicit activities.

As we would expect, Lord Krishna and Srila Prabhupada give us a much different picture of the process of Krishna consciousness realization and preaching. To begin with, as we have seen, Srila Prabhupada draws a sharp distinction between the preaching of a neophyte and that of a genuine eternal preceptor guru.

First, the genuine guru preaches with unshakable conviction that he has nothing to do with this material world: "They (perfected gurus) descend on different planets as messiahs by the order of the Lord to deliver the fallen souls. On earth they come to do good to the people of the world in different circumstances under different climatic influences. They have nothing to do with this material world save and except to reclaim the fallen souls rotting in material existence, deluded by the material energy." (SB 1.19.23)

Second, far from being "overwhelmed by sin," when the genuine guru preaches, he can even purify sins accumulated in the Ganges: "Devotees and saintly persons advanced in the renounced order can deliver even the Ganges... Because saintly devotees always keep the Lord within the core of their hearts, they can perfectly cleanse the holy places of all sinful reactions." (SB 9.9.6)

Third, when the genuine guru preaches, under no circumstances can he fall down into sinful, material activities: "Kayadhu, the mother of Prahlada Maharaja, stayed under the protection of Narada Muni without fear from any direction. Similarly, Narada Muni, in his transcendental position, stayed with the young woman without fear of deviation. Narada Muni, Haridasa Thakura, and similar acharyas especially empowered to broadcast the glories of the Lord cannot be brought down to the material platform. Therefore one is strictly forbidden to think that the acharya is an ordinary human being (gurusuh nara matih)." (SB 7.7.14) The "living guru" project is so much convinced that the guru can be brought down to the material platform, they actively generate a vengeful mood towards those who might disagree.

We know devotees who actually believed the "living guru" dogma: after attaining perfection you will probably fall down again. And after hearing this bleak "eternal treadmill" philosophy they wanted to commit suicide. Perhaps not too surprisingly, the GBC's primary "living guru" writer, who often pens their bleak tirades called "guru position papers" is also fond of reading books by Franz Kafka, an atheistic author known for his bleak, depressing and nightmarish treadmill scenarios.

The obvious practical result is that many devotees are now reluctant to preach, having been convinced by the "living guru" project that once they begin preaching "the sins of the fallen" will accumulate on them, and they will have to fall down, just as various "living gurus" have done.

4.2) Q. But doesn't the genuine guru risk falling down when he preaches to the sinful?

A. In Cc. Madhya 22.71 Prabhupada states flatly, "there is no possibility that a first class devotee will fall down, even though he may mix with nondevotees to preach."

4.3) Q. And yet why do supposed gurus sometimes become overwhelmed by materialism?

A. On page 116 of the Nectar of Devotion, Srila Prabhupada explains, "A bona fide spiritual master will never become (fallen) like that. But sometimes, if a spiritual master is not properly authorized and only on his own initiative becomes a spiritual master, he may be carried away by an accumulation of wealth and a large number of disciples."

Note: Here Srila Prabhupada clearly points out that the falldowns of the "living gurus" proves they are "not properly authorized."

Prabhupada confirms his above statement in a letter, "Unless one is a resident of Krishna loka (the Lord's own abode) one cannot be a spiritual master. That is the first proposition. A layman cannot be a spiritual master, and if he becomes so, then he will simply create a disturbance." The "living guru" project wants laymen or neophytes to artificially pose as perfected gurus, and the result, as predicted herein by Prabhupada is, "he will simply create a disturbance."

4.4) Q. But doesn't the "living" representative guru who performs the initiation take on the karma of the disciple at the time of the initiation as Prabhupada describes in the fourth Canto of the Bhagavatam?

A. This is effectively done by the transcendental knowledge (divyam jnanam) and devotional process which is given by the spiritual master to the disciple or initiate. It is not like an electrical charge.

The classical definition of initiation is given by Srila Jiva Goswami Prabhupada in the Bhakti-Sandarbha (283):

"Divyam jnanam yato dadyat kuryat papasya sanksayam tasmad dikseti sa prokta desikais tattva kovidaih"

"Diksha is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of revealed scriptures knows this process as diksha." (Cited by Srila Prabhupada in Cc. ML 8.312)

The purification of the devotee is effected in two ways.

1) By receiving, hearing and chanting the Hare Krishna Mantra as received in disciplic succession from a bona fide layman, preacher, priest or maha-bhagavata Vaishnava devotee. Thus by the power of the Hari Nama (holy name) received in disciplic succession the candidate becomes purified of his sinful activities and is officially initiated. Similarly, Prabhupada says that the modern day Christians, by accepting the instructions of Lord Jesus, are freed of sins, even today.

2) By receiving Divyam Jnanam (divyam jnanam yato dadyat) or transcendental knowledge from the pure devotee one awakens his spiritual consciousness and thus

becomes purified. And thus (kuryat papasya sanksayam) the candidate becomes purified of sinful reactions.

Srila Prabhupada can purify the new disciples through his divyam jnanam and his transcendental potency of his books, his teachings and His personal presence through his murti and his pictures.

While it is true that the "living representative" takes on some forms of residual karma, as any "karmic interaction" by a preacher, book distributor or bhakta leader would do, the predominant purification is done through the vani (words) and divyam jnanam of the maha-bhagavata Srila Prabhupada, the actual one hundred percent Krishna conscious spiritual master.

Lastly, we find that many "living gurus" are constantly complaining of general illnesses, heart murmurs, headaches, mystery poisoning, evil spirits, ghostly hauntings, spiritual failings, demoniac influences, and so on. Sometimes this results in taking narcotic pills, LSD, or tantric ghost-busting, even falldowns into illicit sex and meat eating, which they attribute to "taking karma." One might ask if they were ever authorized to take this karma? Why did they falsely assume that they were qualified to take this karma?

4.5) Q. But don't these falldowns seem odd, because after all the living gurus are trying to follow Srila Prabhupada's order?

A. Srila Prabhupada has never ordered nonrealized neophytes to pose as realized gurus. He knew that such pretenders would inevitably fail as individuals, and if they were supposed to act as leaders, perhaps also destroy the spiritual mission as well.

Prabhupada describes the pattern of failure of the post-1936 "living guru" project in the Gaudiya Matha: "The difficulty is, sometimes things are interpreted in a manner which dovetails one's own sense gratification. I have personal experience of this from my guru maharaja's institution. Different Godbrothers made different interpretations of the words of guru maharaja, for sense gratification, (they artificially posed themselves as "living gurus") and the whole mission was disrupted.

"This is still going on for the last forty years without any proper settlement. I am always afraid of this crack, but I am sure if our aim is to serve Krishna sincerely, and the spiritual master simultaneously, that will be our success. That means serve Krishna and the spiritual master simultaneously with equal faith and serious vow, and then success is sure." (Letter 18 October 1969)

It should be noted that the spiritual master referred to by Prabhupada is HIM. Prabhupada described his idea of the foundation of his movement early on in the formation of ISKCON.

In a letter dated 11th February 1967, he clearly states: "I wish that each and every branch shall keep their separate identity and cooperate keeping the acharya in the center. On this principle we can open any number of branches all over the world. The Rama Krishna mission works on this principle and thus as an organization they have done wonderfully."

Many senior devotees opine that disobedience of the above injunction by Prabhupada is the root cause of the "living guru project's" failures.

4.6) Q. Still, isn't it true, as today's "living gurus" claim, that the guru risks being overwhelmed by material illusion or sin at any moment?

A. In a conversation in December 1988, the "living guru" author of "The Guru and What Prabhupada Said" remarked, "It's inevitable that gurus will fall. Now, sannyasi is synonymous with guru, and ninety five percent of ISKCON's sannyasis fall, so probably ninety-five percent of ISKCON's gurus will fall. Failure of gurus is inevitable."

But in the Bhagavad-gita (18. 68-69) Krishna offers this assurance to those who genuinely preach the supreme science of the Lord's devotional service: "For one who explains the supreme secret to the devotees, devotional service is guaranteed, and in the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear."

And in his commentary on these verses, Srila Prabhupada confirms, "Anyone. . .who tries sincerely to present Bhagavad-gita, as it is, will advance in devotional activities and reach the pure devotional stage of life. As a result of such pure devotion, he is sure to go back home, back to Godhead."

Although the "living gurus" assert that preaching is risky and may lead the guru into illusion, Krishna and Srila Prabhupada confirm the exact opposite, that genuine preaching overcomes illusion and brings one closer to the Lord.

"The Lord is more pleased when He sees that His servants are properly respected, because such servants risk everything for the service of the Lord and so are very dear to the Lord. The Lord declares in the Bhagavad-gita (18.69) that no one is dearer to Him than one who risks everything to preach His glory." (SB 1.2.17)

Srila Prabhupada does not support the contaminated or materially affected guru theory. He says in the Srimad Bhagavatam 1.12.16. "Such transcendental literatures, missionaries and representatives of the Lord are spotlessly white because the contamination of the material qualities cannot even touch them. They are always protected by the Lord...."

4.7) Q. At what point does the "fallen guru" fail?

A. As soon as he thinks he's a guru. "If one follows the orders of his spiritual master, there is no question of falling down. As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master, and becomes anxious to occupy his post, he immediately falls down." (SB 5.12.14)

Amazingly, sometimes sentimental devotees will demand "photographic evidence" that the ersatz guru has fallen into gross sense gratification, before he can be rejected. Here Prabhupada says that simply by his unauthorized desire to be recognized as a guru, the neophyte has already fallen. More amazingly, even after these foolish "guru" disciples fall into an abominable state, the GBC leaders and sentimental neophytes insist that these ersatz gurus should retain a sort of ongoing exalted recognition: "they were gurus."

Even more amazing is the explanation given by some GBC and overzealous sentimental followers that such falldown in sinful activities is a "spiritual pastime" or "lila" on the part of the "living guru." Of course such emotional sentiment has no basis in scripture or historical facts. Rather this is the basis for dangerous fanaticism. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura used to say, "If one thinks he is a guru, he is a goru_(a cow)."

4.6) Q. Why can't the "living gurus" understand that a pure devotee is always protected by the Lord?

A. As Srila Prabhupada observes in SB 7.8.12, "Hiranyakasipu (a famous demon) did not know that Prahlada Maharaja was the most fortunate person within the three worlds because Prahlada was protected by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such are the misunderstandings of demons. They do not know that a devotee is protected in all circumstances (kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati)." So the "living gurus" misunderstanding that a guru, or indeed even a sincere neophyte, might be lost to illusion_due to sincere preaching effort_is demoniac. It proves that the "living gurus" and their advocates have succumbed to material illusion themselves.

Not only is the pure devotee protected from falling down, so is anyone who sincerely takes shelter of that devotee. "If one is under the protection of a devotee and sincerely renders service to him, by this process of bhakti-yoga one is certainly able to counteract all sinful reactions." (SB 9.9.8). Thus, Srila Prabhupada opposes another foundational pillar of the "living guru" project, that preaching puts one at risk spiritually. One may incur physical risk_fools may attack_but that is another thing.

CHAPTER FIVE

LORD KRISHNA'S SUCCESSORS_CONTAMINATED?

5.1) Q. In Prabhupada's guru succession, the Brahma-Madhava-Gaudiya sampradaya, do we find any examples of anyone with material contamination?

A. Absolutely not. Many would-be-gurus, especially within the "living guru" project, emphatically claim otherwise, possibly to downplay their own mistakes, illusions, cheating and various material contaminations. For instance, after incidents of drug taking and homosexuality, the post-1977 guru project claimed, in their August 1980 GBC report: "There are examples in the Srimad Bhagavatam of great devotees having difficulties. ...Lord Brahma was affected by sex attraction for his daughter."

This offensive attack on the parampara is a continued theme. The notion that "Krishna's pure guru successors are subject to contamination" has expanded in the "living guru" project. For example, a "living guru" based in eastern India, lectured in January 1990, that sometimes, for a few minutes, Krishna's great successor gurus, such as Lord Brahma, become bewildered by maha-maya (mundane illusion).

Who is that rascal?

In a morning walk conversation recorded on 10 December 1975, in Vrindavana, Srila Prabhupada turns this claim on its head:

Disciple: I was recently told by one devotee that the acharya does not have to be a pure devotee.

Prabhupada: What?

Disciple: That the acharya does not have to be a pure devotee.

Prabhupada: Who is that rascal? Who said?. . . Who is that rascal? The acharya does not have to be a pure devotee?

Disciple: Nitai said it... He said that Lord Brahma is the acharya in the Brahma sampradaya, but yet he is sometimes afflicted by passion. So therefore he is saying that it appears that the acharya does not have to be a pure devotee...

Prabhupada: He manufactured his idea. Therefore he's a rascal. Therefore he's a rascal. Nitai has become an authority?

Disciple: No. Actually he said that he thought...

Prabhupada: He thought something rascaldom, and he is expressing that. Therefore he is more rascal. These things are going on. As soon as he reads some books, he becomes acharya, whatever rascal he may be. These things are to be seen in this way, that, 'Such an exalted person_ he sometimes becomes passionate, so how much

we shall be careful.' That is the instruction. It is not that the acharya has become passionate. Therefore I shall become passionate. I am strict follower of the acharya. These rascals say."

The "rascal" devotee mentioned above, who maintained that the parampara could be contaminated, was later banned entirely from ISKCON by Srila Prabhupada himself. This extreme action by Prabhupada was so rare, few devotees recall any other similar banishment.

Clearly, Srila Prabhupada saw the "contaminated succession" idea as extremely dangerous and insidious, yet this idea now forms one of the primary pillars of the "living guru" project's philosophy.

In a letter dated 13 February 1968, Srila Prabhupada lists Krishna's sampradaya, His cent-percent uncontaminated (guru) successors: "My guru maharaja was in the 10th generation from Lord Chaitanya. We are eleventh from Lord Chaitanya. The disciplic succession is as follows: 1. Sri Krishna, 2. Brahma, 3. Narada, 4. Vyasa, 5. Madhva,... 19. Madhavendra Puri, 20. Ishvara Puri, 21. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, 22. (Swarupa, Sanatan) Rupa, 23. (Jiva) Raghunatha, 24. Krishna dasa, 25. Narottama, 26. Viswanatha, 27. (Baladeva) Jagannatha, 28. (Bhaktivinode) Gurakishore, 29. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, 30. Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta."

5.2) Q. But isn't there a system in our sampradaya that anyone can just become a guru after the departure of his guru?

Unfortunately, the "living guru" project has created their own idea of who is qualified to be in the parampara. Quoting a Gaudiya Matha advisor, the editors of the guru project's March 1990 "ISKCON Journal," have seen fit to print the following statement: "But there is a system in our sampradaya. So Tirtha Maharaja, Madhava Maharaja, S... Maharaja, our gurudeva, Swamiji_Swami Bhaktivedanta_they all became acharyas."

But Prabhupada openly disagreed with the above claim. In numerous letters, conversations and in his books, he clearly stated that these gentlemen were not qualified to be designated as acharyas. For instance, a letter dated 14 November 1973, Srila Prabhupada says, "Bhakti Vilas Tirtha is very much antagonistic to our society, and he has no clear conception of devotional service. He is contaminated."

And in a letter dated 28 April 1974, Srila Prabhupada goes on to analyze his Godbrother's contamination: "S... Maharaja is responsible for disobeying the order of guru maharaja... If guru maharaja could have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be acharya, he would have mentioned. Because on the night he passed away, he talked of so many things, but he never mentioned an acharya. His idea was acharya was not to be nominated amongst the Governing Body. He said openly, 'You make a GBC and conduct the mission.' So his idea was amongst the GBC, who

would come out successfully and self-effulgent acharya would be automatically selected.

"So S... Maharaja and his two associate gentlemen unauthorizedly selected one acharya, and later it proved to be a failure. The result is that now everyone is claiming to be acharya even though they may be kanistha adhikary, with no ability to preach. In some camps the acharya is being changed three times a year. Therefore," Srila Prabhupada clearly orders, "we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp." Srila Prabhupada wants no concocted, materially contaminated "acharya factory" or "living guru" project such as we have witnessed since 1977.

"Actually," Srila Prabhupada continues, "amongst my Godbrothers, no one is qualified to become acharya. So it is better not to mix with my Godbrothers very intimately, because instead of inspiring our students and disciples, they may sometimes pollute them. This attempt was made by them previously (notably in 1970) by them, especially Madhava Maharaja, Tirtha Maharaja and Bon Maharaja, but somehow I saved the situation. This is going on."

Note: Please see the contrast between the "living guru" ISKCON Journal's statements and Srila Prabhupada's. They name three "acharyas" but Prabhupada says that "no one (of his Godbrothers) is qualified to become acharya. Moreover, Srila Prabhupada cautions about their ability to "pollute" his followers.

Sometimes the GBC's claim that Prabhupada had not clearly instructed them to avoid Gaudiya Matha consultations. But we find one "living guru" writing the following: "(When Prabhupada was sick and there was some discussion that he might leave his body). One devotee suggested that perhaps one of Swamiji's (Gaudiya Matha) Godbrothers should come to America and fill in for Swamiji, and if the worst happened, take over the leadership of ISKCON, Swamiji said he would not call any of his Godbrothers to come and take care of his disciples. He said, 'If this person speaks just one word different from what I am saying, there will be great confusion among you.' Actually, he said that the idea was a great insult to the spiritual master." (Lilamrita 3 p. 162)

Srila Prabhupada cautioned about the role of the first two gentlemen, (they) "have unlawfully usurped the missionary activities of Srila Prabhupada..." (SPL 30 September 1969) Further, in the Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.18.22. Srila Prabhupada compares Tirtha Maharaja to the demon Ravana. Hardly an example of a bona fide Guru.

Nevertheless, even after receiving the above instruction, ISKCON's leaders boldly went ahead and committed this "insult to the spiritual master." They mixed intimately with S... Maharaja, especially in 1978 when they laid the foundation of their "living guru" project, and made him their de facto sampradaya-acharya, by placing his instruction above Srila Prabhupada's instruction. As Prabhupada had

prophetically foretold, his Gaudiya Matha Godbrother's advice would cause great confusion.

The GBC new advisor helped them establish that a ritual "officiating priest" or deputy (ritvik-acharya) was practically as good as (worshipable) acharya, as well as a number of other dubious philosophical deviations from Prabhupada's teachings.. This was like telling a Church minister that he was "practically as good as Jesus Himself."

To be a humble officiating priest or deputy representative, as authorized by Prabhupada, especially on the 18th of October 1977, is one thing. But to place oneself on the level of eternal preceptor guru and accept worship on the level of Prabhupada is an entirely different thing.

5.3) Q. What is the position of the bona fide eternal preceptor guru? Can he be available in other means that his direct physical presence?

A. In a letter dated 28 May 1968, Srila Prabhupada reassures us, "Krishna and His representative are the same. Just like Krishna can be present simultaneously in millions of places. Similarly, the spiritual master can be present wherever the disciple wants. A spiritual master is the principle, not the body. Just like a television can be seen in thousands of places by the principle of relay monitoring."

As we recall, for nearly all his students nearly all the time prior to 1977, Srila Prabhupada was already physically absent. Most devotees served him in separation through engagements in different centers under temple presidents and other senior devotees. Yet through his relay-monitoring system, his officiating acharya-system, we could experience his spiritual presence and even extend it to the remote corners of the world.

CHAPTER SIX

CHRISTIANS AND IMPERSONALISTS?

6.1) Q. But the motivation behind the "living guru" project seems to be personalism_maintaining personal contact between the disciple and the disciplic succession. True?

A. So-called personalism may be one thing behind the "living guru" project. But another thing is the "living guru" project's misunderstanding that the spiritually pure devotee can nonetheless manifest material conditioning and affection. Repeatedly, Srila Prabhupada forbids this mingling of the spiritual with the material:

"If one tries to mingle the worship of yogamaya (the pure spiritual reality) with mahamaya (the material illusion), considering them one and the same, he does not

show very high intelligence. The idea that everything is one is indulged in by those with less brain substance. Fools and rascals say that the worship of yogamaya and mahamaya is the same. This conclusion is simply the result of mental speculation, and it has no practical effect." (Cc. Madhya 3.8.90)

Despite such clear warnings, the "living guru" project insists that aspirants worship persons influenced by mahamaya and consider it all yogamaya. This is impersonalism.

6.2) Q. But is it not popular with some of the advisors of the living guru experimental project, and a number of current "living gurus" themselves, to advocate that the living entities originate from the impersonal tatastha or Brahmajyoti?

A. Prabhupada refutes their idea as impersonal contamination: "Formerly we were with Krishna in His lila or sport. But this covering of maya may be of very, very, very, very long duration_ therefore, many creations are coming and going. Due to this long period of time it is sometimes said that we are ever-conditioned. But this long duration of time becomes very insignificant when one actually comes to Krsna consciousness." (Lecture in Australia_ from January 1982 BBT Report)

6.3) Q. At times the "living gurus" warn that taking shelter of Srila Prabhupada_ and not them_ means adopting a "Christian conception." Any truth to this warning?

A. Living gurus have started branding the worshippers of Srila Prabhupada as "influenced by Christians," while they simultaneously adopt many Christian styled ideas.

1. The GBC now calls itself "The highest ecclesiastical body guiding ISKCON." (BTG 1990-1991) Yet Prabhupada did not use this term favorably, instead he condemned the ecclesiastical smarta brahmins in India. This GBC "ecclesiastical body" now "certifies more gurus," but Prabhupada said we should avoid rubber-stamped or ecclesiastically appointed gurus.

2. The entire philosophical foundation of "appointed" gurus resembles the College of Cardinals and their appointed Popes.

3. One living guru helped draft a position paper in 1985, stating that the "living gurus" must be viewed as Popes.

4. One "living guru" started an "interfaith" movement and ordered his followers to dress as Christian monks.

5. The GBC's main writer also wrote "Entering The Life Of Prayer" which details his studies of various Christian ideas.

6. Yet another "living guru" mixed Christianity with his drugs, sex, and Tibetan Buddhism movement.

7. Another recommended that his followers read "Communication With The Spirit World," which says that Christ fell into illusion, exactly as the "living gurus" have done.

In short, some of the most blatant adaptations of pseudo-Christianity has manifested directly in the "living guru" project. Perhaps the "living gurus" have not studied history. There we shall find that the Christians also had a very famous program to make "living pure devotees."

Originally all priests were called Popes. Not until the fourth century did it become the distinctive title of the Bishop of Rome. They said that "St. Peter speaks through the Pope," just as the "living guru" project says that "Prabhupada speaks through his successor GBC living gurus."

The Papal system holds elections to confer the Papal office, just as the "living guru" project has nominations and elections. Eventually, Popes excommunicated each other, just as "living gurus" have done. The Popes came to a low moral standard, and a "Papal reform movement" was started. Following exactly in those footsteps, the "living guru" project has also started a "guru reform movement." One major effect, noted even by the public media, was the use of severe force and repression to control "heretics." A "heretic" could even lose his life. Do we need to say whose footsteps the "living gurus" follow in?

In 1409 the council of Bishops finally claimed to have ultimate authority over the Pope, and similarly, the "living guru" project has partially attempted to bring control back to the GBC council and away from the "absolute" gurus.

The problem is that the "living gurus" hold the majority voting block on the current GBC council. The result is that the GBC has practically become another version of the 1978 "guru acharya board." This identical problem manifested at the Vatican when the Popes controlled the voting.

At any rate, the basic system of electing, appointing, or conferring pure status upon others is definitely part of the "living guru" project's theology. Some of the members of the "living guru" project openly state that ISKCON needs figureheads like the Pope, and this is essential to the propagation of bona fide Krishna consciousness. However, Srila Prabhupada has never said, anywhere, that persons who desire to worship bona fide acharyas are "influenced by a Christian conception." Neither has he established that sincere worshipers of Christ are Mayavadis.

Q. 6.4) If the "new guru" changes, why is it that only his "initiations" are redone. Why are the marriages, deity installations or other priestly functions he performed not performed again?

A. We have asked some senior devotee's opinions on this point and many conclude that remarrying someone, or reinstalling a deity has "no control or financial value" but reinitiating the follower is of interest because it provides a position for power and glory. In other words, in all other areas of management they will argue: 'what is done is done', but in the area of having control of one hundred percent surrendered souls, there is enormous, even fanatical interest and elaborate meetings and discussions. Or as some devotees say of the new gurus: "they are into collecting bodies and bucks."

As of completing this paper, we discovered that some gurus in ISKCON have forced through a resolution: even Prabhupada's original disciples may need a "sannyasa reinitiation," a "new spiritual name." There is no evidence, from Prabhupada's books, to support this new concoction. Moreover, when a Gaudiya Matha guru "reinitiated" some of Prabhupada's sannyasis, and gave them new names, he was branded as "unauthorized, a demon" and so on.

6.5) Q. We sometimes find that a so-called "disciple" of a new guru goes on to advance very solidly, while his so-called guru falls down into all forms of sense gratification. Did Srila Prabhupada notice this tendency among the leaders?

A. Srila Prabhupada: "Regarding your questions, you say that amongst the elder disciples there are still symptoms of greed, anger, strife, bickering, etc., but you are one of them. You are one of the old students, so you fall into that group. So, the fighting is amongst that group, but not amongst the real workers." (Letter 9-9-72)

Anyone who sincerely serves the spiritual master, namely Srila Prabhupada, is a real worker. He can advance way beyond a so-called "new guru" and indeed we are seeing this practically everyday.

6.6) Q. Why is it that members of the "living guru" project are always disagreeing with their former statements, changing their ideas, and arguing over their own translations, if not sometimes even shouting obscenities at each other, and so on?

A. Srila Prabhupada: "It is a defect of Mayavada commentaries that they make one statement in one place and a contradictory statement in another place as a tactic to refute the Bhagavata school. Thus Mayavadi philosophers do not even follow the regulative principles." (Cc. Adi 5.41)

CHAPTER SEVEN

YOU CAN BET YOUR BOTTOM DOLLAR ...

7.1) Q. But didn't one of the living gurus admit that this whole appointment of gurus was not done by Srila Prabhupada?

In 1979-1980, one of the living gurus had incensed the others by claiming that he possessed Prabhupada's exclusive "guru shakti" or potency. The other gurus were thus considering how to excommunicate this deviant guru brother. But in December 1980, at Topanga, California, he made a dramatic turnabout. He admitted that Srila Prabhupada had named no eternal preceptor gurus:

"Actually, Prabhupada never appointed any gurus. He did not appoint eleven gurus. He appointed eleven ritvik (officiating priests). He never appointed them as gurus. Myself and the other G.B.C. have done the greatest disservice to this movement for the last three years, because we interpreted the appointment of ritviks as the appointment of gurus...."

"(What Srila Prabhupada said was), 'All right, I will appoint so many,' and he named them. He made it very clear that they (new members) were still to be his disciples. At that point it was very clear in my mind that they were his disciples...."

"Now I understand that what he did was very clear. He was physically incapable of performing the function of initiating physically; therefore 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, it is not 'whoever is nearest.' It is wherever your heart goes_to whom you can repose your faith in."

"But when it is officiating, it's 'whoever is nearest,' and he was very clear.... 'Whoever is nearest will check you out. Then, on my behalf, they will initiate....'"

"If it had been more than that (officiating priests), 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 did not, because he already said it a million times. He said, 'My guru maharaja did not appoint anyone. It is by qualification.' We made a great mistake...."

You cannot show me anything on tape or in writing where Prabhupada says, 'I appoint these eleven as gurus.' It does not exist, because He never appointed any gurus. This is a myth."

The Topanga Canyon talks were not appreciated by the other "successor gurus" who saw this straightforward admission as a threat to their autocratic authority. Soon afterwards the above guru recalled his "confessions tapes" and went back to advocate the "successor acharya appointed guru theory."

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCIPLIC CONCLUSION

8.1) Q. Practically, we see that many new devotees are advancing in Krishna consciousness, even though they were never initiated or their so-called "living guru," provided by the GBC has long since left Krishna consciousness. How is this possible?

A. Srila Prabhupada: "Regarding the disciplic succession coming from Arjuna, disciplic succession does not always mean that one has to be initiated officially. Disciplic succession means to accept the disciplic conclusion. Arjuna was a disciple of Krishna, and Brahma was also a disciple of Krishna.

"Thus there is no disagreement between the conclusions of Brahma and Arjuna. Vyasadeva is in the disciplic succession of Brahma. The teachings to Arjuna were recorded by Vyasadeva verbatim. So according to the axiomatic truth, things equal to one another are equal to each other. We are not exactly directly from Vyasadeva, but our Gurudeva is a representative of Vyasadeva. Because Vyasadeva and Arjuna are of the same status, being students of Krishna, therefore we are in the disciplic succession of Arjuna. Things equal to the same things are equal to one another." (Prabhupada Letter 10/31/69)

A devotee named Ajamila dasa comments on this quote by Srila Prabhupada: "What makes a devotee advance in spiritual life? If it is the official ceremony, then there are a lot of bloomed (fallen) Prabhupada disciples (officially initiated) who are supposedly making advancement in spite of their fallen condition and not following the process. Or is it acceptance of the disciplic conclusion by continuing to follow the process that makes us advance in spiritual life?...It seems clear that it is the acceptance of the disciplic conclusion and continuing to follow the process which actually connects a devotee to the disciplic succession, regardless of whether or not he is initiated officially."

We are not attempting to minimize the initiation ceremony, but we are trying to place it in proper perspective. The "living guru" project places supreme importance on the official ceremony, but we see evidence that persons who had the ceremony performed, even by Srila Prabhupada himself, may sometimes become atheists, whereas new persons with no ceremony are increasing their taste and desire for Krishna consciousness. Therefore, "accepting the disciplic conclusion" is actually of primary importance, as this means one accepts Srila Prabhupada and HIS teachings as one's eternal spiritual guide.

Eventually, as the "living guru" turmoil dies down, one may be able to find many temples where one will be encouraged to accept Srila Prabhupada as one's factual and eternal guru. In the meantime, however, one should take heart from the above quote.

8.2) Q. Members of the "living guru" project sometimes say that we need new sources of additional "spiritual information." They also say that one has to physically meet the "living guru," although they have never shown us where Srila Prabhupada has ever used this term in His books (unrevised editions).

A. Srila Prabhupada: "There is nothing new to be said. Whatever I had to say, I have already said in my books. Now you must all try to understand it and continue with your endeavors. Whether I am present or not does not matter. Just as Krishna is living eternally, the living being also lives eternally. But especially...kirtir yasya sa jivati: 'One who has done service to the Lord lives forever.' You have been taught to serve Krishna, and with Krishna we'll live eternally. Our life is eternal. Na hanyamane sarire: the disappearance of this temporary body doesn't matter. The body is meant for disappearance. So live forever by serving Krishna. Thank you very much." (Vrindavan 17th May 1977)

"You (disciples) are all intelligent and experienced men; you can go on managing this movement. If I depart, there is no cause for lamentation. I will always be with you through my books and my orders. I will always remain with you in that way. (B.T.G. 13 1-2 December 1977)

"I will always be with you through my books and my orders." This fact has been realized by many new devotees who never "physically" met Srila Prabhupada, but who have faith that he "will always remain with you in that way." Despite sometimes intense negative propaganda by the "living guru" advocates, some newcomers have nonetheless succeeded in becoming devotees of the bona fide guru and Krishna.

8.3) Q. The "living guru" project says there is no possibility of going back to Godhead without formal initiation by one of their appointed "gurus." Is this verified by Srila Prabhupada?

A) As is usual with many statements issued by the "living guru" project, Srila Prabhupada states the exact opposite:

I) "One does not have to undergo initiation or execute the activities required before initiation. One simply has to vibrate the holy name with his lips. Thus even a man in the lowest class (chandala) can be delivered."

II) "The offenseless chanting of the holy name does not depend on the initiation process." (Cc. M.L. 15.108)

III) "The holy name of Krishna is the controller of the opulence of liberation, and it is identical with Krishna. Simply by touching the holy name with one's tongue, immediate effects are produced. Chanting the holy name does not depend on initiation, pious activities or the purascharya regulative principles generally

observed before initiation. The holy name does not wait for all these activities. It is self sufficient. (Cc. M.L. 15.110)

IV) "Whether a Vaishnava is properly initiated or not is not a subject for consideration. One may be initiated and yet contaminated by the Mayavadi philosophy, but a person who chants the holy name of the Lord offenselessly will not be so contaminated. A properly initiated Vaishnava may be imperfect, but one who chants the holy name of the Lord offenselessly is all perfect. Although he may apparently be a neophyte, he still has to be considered a pure unalloyed devotee." (Cc. M.L. 15.111)

We are not minimizing the importance of the initiation process or diksha (pancaratrika vidhi), but rather we are seeing the stress given by Srila Prabhupada on accepting the instruction or siksha (Bhagavata vidhi).

When the "living guru" project says one cannot reach Krishna without their formal ceremony it is incorrect. We also want the formal ceremony, as a link to Srila Prabhupada, it will assist one in the chanting of the Holy Name. But it must be a ceremony where one accepts Srila Prabhupada as his eternal preceptor guru and the duty of the current "living guru" is to simply act as humble deputies and thus emphasize the "real acharya" maha-bhagavata Srila Prabhupada.

8.4) Q. Can any GBC sannyasi (monk) be voted in by the GBC as an initiating or diksha guru?

A. Srila Prabhupada: "On the whole you may know that he (a "living guru" from the deviant Gaudiya Matha) is not a liberated person, and therefore he cannot initiate any person to Krishna consciousness. It requires special benediction from higher authorities." (Letter 4-26-68) Note: the "living guru" project does not recognize that a pure devotee is operating from the authority of the Supreme Lord directly, he is not operating due to the 2/3 vote of some ecclesiastical committee.

8.5) Q. Is it true that Srila Prabhupada cannot be here presently or physically?

A) Srila Prabhupada: "Krishna and His representative are the same. Just like Krishna can be present simultaneously in millions of places. Similarly, the spiritual master can also be present wherever the disciple wants. A spiritual master is the principle, not the body. Just like a television (picture) can be seen in thousands of places by the principle of relay monitoring." (Letter 5-28-68)

A. "I understand that you are feeling my absence. Krishna will give you strength. Physical presence is immaterial presence of the transcendental sound received from the spiritual master should be the guidance of life. That will make our spiritual life successful. If you feel very strongly about my absence you may place my pictures on my sitting places and this will be a source of inspiration for you. (1-19-67)

'So although a physical body is not present, the vibration should be accepted as the presence of the spiritual master, vibration. What we have heard from the spiritual master, that is living.' (Prabhupada lecture in Los Angeles, 13th January 1969)

CHAPTER NINE

ACCEPTING NON PRESENT GURUS IN HISTORY

9.1) Q. Are there examples in the history of our sampradaya of anyone's accepting as his eternal preceptor guru someone who is not physically present or someone other than one's own diksha guru?

A: The song "Guru-parampara," composed by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, describes: rupa-priya mahajana, jiva, raghunatha hana, tara priya kavi krishnadasa krishnadasa-priya-bara, narottama seva-para, jara pada visvanatha-asa. Officially, in the formal or "pancharatrika" sense, Srila Narottama dasa Thakura's initiating guru was the great paramahansa Srila Lokanatha Gosvami_not Krishnadasa Kaviraja. Yet the above song portrays Narottama dasa's factual guru, or Bhagavata-parampara guru, his life-and-soul sad-guru or eternal preceptor guru, as Krishnadasa Kaviraja, although Narottama Dasa Thakura also regarded Srila Lokanatha Goswami as an exalted Paramahansa maha-bhagavata.

Similarly, the biographical literatures "Narottama-vilasa" and "Bhakti-Ratnakara" describe that Narottama dasa Thakura accepted Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Jiva Gosvami Prabhupada as his primary siksha-gurus and Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami as his Bhagavata-parampara guru_his life-and-soul sad-guru or eternal preceptor guru. However, Narottama dasa Thakura never had direct physical contact with Srila Rupa Goswami.

Srila Prabhupada does not even mention Narottama dasa's relationship with Lokanatha Gosvami, despite the latter guru's role in the (formal) pancharatrika-sense. Rather, Srila Prabhupada concentrates on Narottama dasa's main Bhagavata-parampara relationship with Krishna dasa Kaviraja. As Srila Prabhupada notes, "The direct disciple of Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami was Narottama dasa Thakura, who accepted Visvanatha Chakravarti as his servitor." (Cc. Adi-lila, intro p. 17)

To put it another way, although Lokanatha Gosvami was Narottama dasa's guru , Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja was one of Narottama dasa's shiksha gurus. Thus Srila Prabhupada's statement that "...the direct disciple of Krishna dasa was Narottama," is explained through the shiksha (Bhagavata) relationship..."

9.2) Q. But in the above example, weren't all the gurus "physically present"? Are there other examples of Vaishnavas who accepted a siksha-guru, even a sad-guru or an eternal preceptor guru, who was not physically present?

A. In the song mentioned previously, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura states, narottama seva-para jara pada visvanatha-asa. "Srila Narottama dasa Thakura ... accepted Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti as his servitor." However, historical records confirm that Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura (1643-1730 A. D.) never met Srila Narottama dasa Thakura physically. Never. How then, did Visvanatha Chakravarti accept Narottama dasa as his guru? Through his transcendental instructions, vani or vibration. As a result, in the most real and essential way, the life and soul of Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura was Srila Narottama dasa Thakura, his guru in the Bhagavata-parampara.

Further, Narottama dasa accepts Srila Rupa Gosvami_ whom he likewise never physically met_ as one of his two primary instructing (siksha) gurus: sri rupa manjari pada, sei mora sampada, sei mor bhajana pujana, sei mora prana dhana, sei mor abharana, sei mor jiverana jivana. "The lotus feet of Sri Rupa Manjari are my treasure, my devotional service, and my object of worship. They give my life meaning, and they are the life of my life."

It is a well known fact that Narottama Dasa Thakura accepted Srila Jiva Goswami Prabhupada as his primary shiksha guru. In the above-noted Caitanya Caritamrta purport, Srila Prabhupada also describes, "Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura accepted Srila Jagannatha dasa Babaji, who initiated Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, who in turn initiated Gaura Kishora dasa Babaji, the spiritual master of Om Vishnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja, the divine master of our humble self."

"Visvanatha Chakravarti accepted Srila Jagannatha dasa Babaji" as his disciple? But nowhere does Srila Prabhupada say how. Through "direct physical contact?" Impossible. In fact, the lifetimes of two gurus, Sri Uddhava dasa Babaji and Sri Madhusudana dasa Babaji, intervene between the lifetime of Visvanatha Chakravarti and that of Jagannatha dasa Babaji.

So there was no question of Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's playing the role of diksha-guru, (pancharatrika-guru), for Jagannatha dasa Babaji. Yet through his instructions: vani or shiksa_ transcendental vibration, Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura became Jagannatha dasa Babaji's Bhagavata-guru, his sad-guru or eternal preceptor guru.

Further, Jagannatha dasa Babaji is said to have initiated Bhaktivinoda Thakura, but the official (pancharatrika) diksha guru of Srila Sacidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakura was one Sri Bepin Behari Goswami, whom both Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura did not include in their lists of the Guru Parampara. Then how is Jagannatha dasa Babaji considered by our Srila Prabhupada to be the initiator of Bhaktivinoda Thakura? Simple, through divyam jnanam and transcendental shiksha.

9.3) Q. Is there any example of someone "giving initiation" to another Vaishnava without being formally his direct diksha or initiating guru?

A. As referred above we might also ask, how can Srila Prabhupada say that "Jagannatha dasa Babaji...initiated Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura"? Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura was factually initiated by Bepin Behari Goswami, a descendant of the caste and family lineage of Lord Nityananda.

Thus we have examples of gurus, cited as "initiating disciples," to whom they gave instruction (siksha) and not official initiation or diksha: Srila Jagannatha Dasa Babaji gave shiksha or transcendental divyam jnanam to Srila Sacidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains in the introduction of his song book "Kalyana Kalpataru" (the desire tree of auspiciousness)": I consider the numerous instructing spiritual masters (shiksha gurus) to be more important, for they show unlimitedly more mercy by training the neophyte devotees in all the essential aspects of practical devotional service (sadhan bhakti)."

9.4) Q. In our Gaudiya Vaishnava disciplic succession, are there other examples of great personalities who accepted someone besides their "official pancharatrika guru" as their "Bhagavata" or sad or eternal preceptor guru?

A. Srinivasa Acharya. In the Caitanya Caritamrta, Srila Prabhupada describes ..."It is said that Abhirama Thakura had a whip and that whoever he touched with it would immediately become an elevated devotee of Krishna. Among his many disciples, Sriman Srinivasa Acharya was the most famous and the most dear, but it is doubtful that he was his initiated disciple." (Cc. Adi-Lila 11.13)

How did Srinivasa Acharya, who was initiated by Sri Gopala Bhatta Goswami, simultaneously become the disciple of Sri Abhirama Thakura? Through shiksha. Simple.

Raghunatha dasa Goswami. Further, Srila Prabhupada describes in Cc. Adi-Lila chapter eight (summary): "A direct disciple of Srila Rupa Goswami was Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami..."

However, Srila Prabhupada describes in the same Caitanya Caritamrta, Adi-Lila, 10.41..."Vasudeva Datta initiated Sri Yadunandan Acarya, the spiritual master of Raghunatha Dasa, who later became Raghunatha dasa Goswami..."

"The forefathers of Raghunatha Dasa Goswami were all Vaishnavas and were very rich men. His spiritual master at home was Yadunandana Acharya." (Cc. Adi 10.92)

Srila Prabhupada further elaborates on the actual position of Yadunandan Acharya. "Yadunandana Acarya was the official initiator spiritual master of

Raghunatha Dasa Goswami. In other words when Raghunatha Dasa Goswami was a householder, Yadunandana Acarya initiated him at home. Later Raghunatha dasa Goswami took shelter of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu at Jagannatha Puri." (Cc. Adi lila 12.56)

Srila Prabhupada also says: "Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was the spiritual master of the six goswamis of Vrindavana." Lecture, Bombay 30th September 1973) And not to be forgotten, when Sri Raghunatha came and took shelter of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in Jagannatha Puri, Sriman Mahaprabhu placed him under the direct care and guidance of Sri Svarupa Damodara Goswami. This has been immortalized by the famous Sri Kavi Karnapura in his "Sri Chaitanya-Chandrodaya-nataka." (10.3)

Acharyo yadunandanah sumadhurah sri vasudeva priyas tac chisyo raghunatha ity adhigunah prabadhiko madrsam sri chaitanya krpatireka satata snigdha svarupanugo vairagyaika nidhir na kasya vidito nilacala tisthatam:

"Raghunatha dasa is a disciple of Yadunandana Acarya, who is very gentle and is extremely dear to Vasudeva Datta, a resident of Kancanapalli. Because of Raghunatha dasa's transcendental qualities, he is always more dear than life for all of us devotees of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, he is always pleasing. Vividly providing a superior example for the renounced order, this very dear follower of Svarupa Damodara Goswami is the ocean of renunciation. Who among the residents of Nilacala (Jagannatha Puri) does know him very well?"

Thus there seems to be four separate relationships:

- 1) His official initiating spiritual master: Sri Yadunandana Acharya.**
- 2) His relationship with Svarupa Damodara Goswami as his instructing spiritual master, thus Raghunatha Dasa Goswami is described as Svarupa Anuga, or a follower and disciple of Srila Svarupa Damodara Goswami.**
- 3) His relationship as a disciple of Sri Rupa Goswami, his "advanced mellows" guru or rasa acharya, who instructed the other Goswamis in rasa sastra.**
- 4) His relationship with Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is also described as his guru.**

9.5) Q. But doesn't Srila Prabhupada give other examples in his books of great Vaishnavas who accepted someone else besides their official diksha guru as their primary or shiksha guru?

A. Yamunacharya and Ramanujacharya. "This is a verse from the "Stotra-ratna" (12) of Yamunacharya, the spiritual master of Ramanujacharya." (Cc. Adi-Lila 3.87) How did Ramanuja accept Sri Yamunacharya as his guru, since they never

physically met? The historical biographies of Sripada Ramanujacharya state that he was initiated by one Gosthipurna into the astakshara mantra. Thus there is no record of Yamunacharya initiating Ramanujacharya. Once again, Ramanujacharya accepted Yamunacharya as his guru through Shiksha.

9.6) Q. Are there other examples of "unofficial" or unconventional initiations in the sastras?

A. Maharishi Sukadeva Goswami and Pariksit Maharaja.

"Maharaja Pariksit. . .because he was initiated by a maha-bhagavata devotee, Sukadeva Goswami." (SB 1.18.16.) But how was Maharaja Pariksit initiated? There is no record in the Bhagavatam of any formal ritualistic fire sacrifice or name change. The simple answer is that Maharishi Sukadeva Goswami initiated Sri Pariksit Maharaja through his divyam jnanam or transcendental knowledge, although Maharaja Pariksit was officially initiated by Kripacharya.

9.7) Q. Any other peculiar examples of Diksha?

A. The example of Sri Narada Muni is very instructive in this connection: cakruh krpam yadyapi tulya darsanah. (SB 1.5.24)

"Those followers of Vedanta blessed me with their causeless mercy." So, the Vedanta Vadis initiated the boy, even before he became self controlled and was detached from childish sporting, etc. But before the initiation, he (the boy) became more and more advanced in discipline, which is very essential for one who wishes to make progress in the line..."

Srila Prabhupada confirms the "initiation" received by Narada Muni, in Srimad Bhagavatam 1.6.2. "Sri Vyasadeva said: What did you (Narada) do after the departure of the great sages who had instructed you in scientific knowledge before the beginning of your present birth?"

"Vyasadeva himself was the disciple of Naradaji, and therefore it was natural to be anxious to hear what Narada did after initiation from the spiritual masters."

In SB 1.6.3, Prabhupada states..."vartitam te param vayah: O Son of Brahma, how did you pass your life after initiation?" In SB 1.6.5. it says, "In his previous life, when Naradaji was impregnated with spiritual knowledge by the grace of the great sages, there was a tangible change in his life, although he was only a boy of five years. That is an important symptom visible after initiation by the bona fide spiritual master..."

Thus Srila Prabhupada explains that:

1) Narada Muni was initiated by several gurus, the Bhaktivedantas. This is somewhat rare example of a disciple being initiated and receiving the mercy of several gurus,

2) There is no mention of any formal ceremony, name giving, or fire sacrifice within the context of this initiation.

3) This initiation consisted mainly of transcendental divyam jnanam (shiksha) imparted by the great sages to the saintly boy, who later became Narada muni.

Thus it is acceptable, and bona fide, to accept the maha-bhagavata or fully realized pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada, as one's primary guru, through his transcendental divyam jnanam, or divine eternal instructions. He arranged this to be done through his books, his teachings. Thus, the real function of Srila Prabhupada's bona fide disciples is to act as humble deputies for the real acharya, Srila Prabhupada.

Tamal Krishna: "This has never happened before, Srila Prabhupada. You are the real acharya for this age, Srila Prabhupada. You perfectly know how to spread Krishna consciousness...." (October 1977)

He lives forever by His Divine instructions and the follower lives with Him. _Srila Prabhupada's dedication to the First Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, 1962

Reporter: What will happen to the movement in the United States when you die?

Prabhupada: I will never die.

Devotees: Jaya, haribolo!

Prabhupada: I shall live from my books and you will utilize. _Conversation, San Francisco 1975

Gurudasa: Wherever you are (Srila Prabhupada) is a tirtha. When you are there, it is better than any place. Tirthi kurvanti tirthani. Tirthi kurvanti tirthani. Where you are is...

Prabhupada: "Tirthi kurvanti tirthani. Svantah sthena gadabhrta. One who keeps Krishna always within the heart, wherever he goes, that is tirtha. Everywhere Krishna is there, but one who remembers, he is the yoginam api sarvesam mad gatenantaratan. It is very simple...." _Conversation 2nd April 1977

Let us all prostrate ourselves at the lotus feet of the maha-bhagavata, paramahansa, pure devotee Srila Prabhupada, the eternal preceptor guru of the Krishna consciousness movement, and the unique empowered personality who has

mercifully come and preached the sublime message of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu all over the world.

**nama om vishnu padaya krishna presthaya bhutale
srimate bhaktivedanta swamin iti namime
namaste saraswate deve gauravani pracarine
nirvisesa sunyavadi pascatya desatarine**

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who is very dear to Lord Krishna, having taken shelter at His lotus feet."

"Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Saraswati Goswami. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Chaitanyadeva and delivering the western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism."

Completed on the auspicious Disappearance day of Gadadhara Pandita and Srila Sacidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

Saturday 19th June 1993. Purnima.

Jaya Srila Prabhupada, Our Living Guru!