

ISKCON

Disciple Course

Students Handbook

Fifth Edition, Gaura-pūrṇimā 2017.

International Society For Krishna Consciousness
Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

ISKCON Disciple Course 5th Edition Gaura-pūrṇimā 2017.

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Welcome!

Welcome to the ISKCON Disciple Course. This is your Seminar Handbook which you'll be using throughout the course, and which we hope you'll keep and use as a reference throughout your devotional career. Therefore, please look after this booklet carefully. Take many notes as you will be studying a variety of interesting and important topics.

This ISKCON Disciples Course is a training program which is meant to help you deepen your understanding of guru-tattva and gurupādāśraya within the multiple guru culture of ISKCON. It is designed for new devotees preparing to take initiation, but is also recommended for leaders, preachers councilors and educators in ISKCON.

The course was developed over a two-year period under the direction of the GBC Guru Services Committee, with the combined efforts of leading educators in ISKCON.

This ISKCON Disciple Course is based on the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and current ISKCON Law and gives reference to the writings from the broader Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition.

I would like to offer my gratitude to the following devotees who were instrumental in its creation, including Prahladananda Swami, Bhakti Caitanya Swami, Ravindra Svarupa dasa, Laxmimoni dasi, Atul Krishna dasa, Gopika Radhika dasi, Ananda Vrindavana dasi, Taraka dasi, Braja Bihari dasa, Madhavananda das, Hanuman das, and many others. Also special thanks to the Mayapur Institute for piloting the course.

We also offer our gratitude to the members of the Steering Committee that created the ISKCON Guru Seminar, out of which the vision and foundation for this Disciple Course grew. That committee included, in addition to some devotees named above, Jayapataka Swami, Bhakti Charu Swami, Radhanatha Swami, Garuda dasa and Rukmini dasi.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to speak to the facilitator or to contact the ISKCON Disciple Course Secretariate (idcsecretariate@gmail.com). In the meantime, all good wishes for the seminar and in your continuing service to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

On behalf of all the Vaiṣṇavas that brought you this Course,

Your servant,
Anuttama dasa
ISKCON Minister of Communications
Member, GBC Guru Services Committee

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Unit 1

Introduction, Theory and Context

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Guru-tattva
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Guru's and ISKCON Authorities' Instructions
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Lesson Topics

Classroom Norms
Principles and Values
Course Broad Aims
Course Assessment

Norms for Classroom Behavior

During the course, in order to maintain an appropriate learning environment, students will agree to follow the Norms for Classroom Behavior. (See Appendix 9, Page 86)

Course Broad Aims

To improve the quality of discipleship within ISKCON in order to promote the long-term wellbeing of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Society and its members.

We will achieve this by enabling students to:

1. Understand the long-standing principles of discipleship, as presented in the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the broader Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition and appreciate the unique contexts in which these teachings are applied within ISKCON.
2. Apply these principles to:
 - a. Form spiritually healthy, constructive relationships with their gurus and senior Vaiṣṇavas
 - b. Act appropriately within those relationships
3. Develop the values and attitudes required of a disciple.
4. Co-operatively serve the Supreme, and His various representatives, in order to perpetuate Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings and mission, through both personal example and instruction.

Aims of the Disciples Course

In what ways could I improve as a disciple?



Course Principles and Values

1. Śrīla Prabhupāda's as Pre-eminent Śikṣā Guru
2. Allegiance to ISKCON and Paramparā
3. Respect for Multiple Authorities and senior Vaiṣṇavas
4. Considerate Selection of Guru

5. Faith in Guru's Instructions
6. Commitment to Vows & Śrīla Prabhupāda's Mission.
7. Exemplary Sādhana, Conduct and Balanced Lifestyle
8. Inquiry, Humility and Service

9. Favorable Association, Inclusivity and Co-operation
10. Cultivation and Propagation of Holy Name

Course Assessment

OPEN BOOK ASSESSMENT

The following questions, or a selection of them, will be allocated by your course facilitator. Your responses should be no more than approximately 250 words. Some questions may require shorter answers. Questions marked with asterisks are mandatory. A minimum grade of 65% is required for an overall pass. You will receive a report of your assessment from your facilitator.

CLOSED BOOK ASSESSMENT

Alternatively, your facilitator may administer a closed book multiple choice style test. The questions will be based upon the open book questions listed below. A minimum grade of 70% is required for an overall pass.

Successful graduates will receive an ISKCON Disciple Course Certificate authorized by the G.B.C. Guru Services Committee.

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION, THEORY AND CONTEXT

Guru-tattva and Paramparā

(Lesson 2)

1. Explain the similarities and differences between the two main categories of guru.
2. Give at least four arguments to refute Ritvikvada philosophy. Give appropriate reference to śāstra in your reply.

Gurupādāśraya in ISKCON

(Lessons 3, 5 & 8)

3. Explain Gurupādāśraya in ISKCON.*
4. Explain how Śrīla Prabhupāda functions as the preeminent śikṣā-guru and Founder Ācārya of ISKCON.*
5. Why is it important that Śrīla Prabhupāda remains the preeminent śikṣā-guru of ISKCON for future generations? *
6. Briefly describe, with reference to current ISKCON Law, appropriate methods of worship for Śrīla Prabhupāda and ISKCON current & future gurus.

ISKCON Gurus

(Lesson 4)

7. Describe the appropriate attitude for an ISKCON guru in regard to the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the authority structure within ISKCON. *
8. Why should one accept dikṣā and śikṣā gurus only within ISKCON and not from outside ISKCON?
9. Describe the appropriate attitude, for an ISKCON disciple, toward gurus in other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava paramparā and organizations.

UNITS TWO & THREE: ESTABLISHING AND ACTING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GURU

Selection of Guru & Initiation Vows

(Lesson 6 & 7)

10. Explain the importance of initiation vows with reference to comments from Śrīla Prabhupāda.
11. List some qualifications of guru that you consider important, with reference to śāstra and the 'Mandatory Qualifications of Dīkṣā-guru in ISKCON' (Appendix 3).
12. Discuss appropriate and inappropriate methods and reasons for selecting guru. Give appropriate reference to śāstra and current ISKCON Law in your reply. *

Guru- sevā

(Lessons 9 & 10)

13. Discuss, with examples, the relationship between guru-sevā and service to the mission of ISKCON? Explain the importance of a balanced approach to these two. *
14. What is guru vapuḥ and guru vāṇī-sevā? Which is more important and why?
15. Give at least four examples of appropriate and inappropriate subjects on which to seek advice from guru. Give appropriate reference to śāstra in your reply.
16. Discuss how a disciple should behave toward ones guru's godbrothers/godsisters. Give appropriate reference to śāstra in your reply.

UNIT FOUR: CO-OPERATIVELY FULFILLING THE RELATIONSHIP

Presenting One's Guru

(Lesson 12 & Lesson 5)

17. Describe what you consider to be the appropriate attitude and behavior, for an ISKCON disciple, in regard to promoting one's guru in public and within the society of Vaiṣṇavas. Give reference to relevant śāstra, and current ISKCON laws in your response. Why is it important for ISKCON disciples to develop an appropriate attitude in this regard?*
18. Why is it important to publicly promote Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-ācārya and preeminent śikṣā-guru in ISKCON for the present and future?*

Relationships within ISKCON

(Lesson 13)

19. Discuss *inappropriate attitudes* and behavior, for an ISKCON disciple, in regard to favoritism or bias on the basis of one's dīkṣā guru. Why is it important for ISKCON disciples to develop an appropriate attitude in this regard? *
20. Describe practical ways of developing and maintaining cooperative relationships with all ISKCON Vaiṣṇavas without inappropriate discrimination on the basis of guru. *

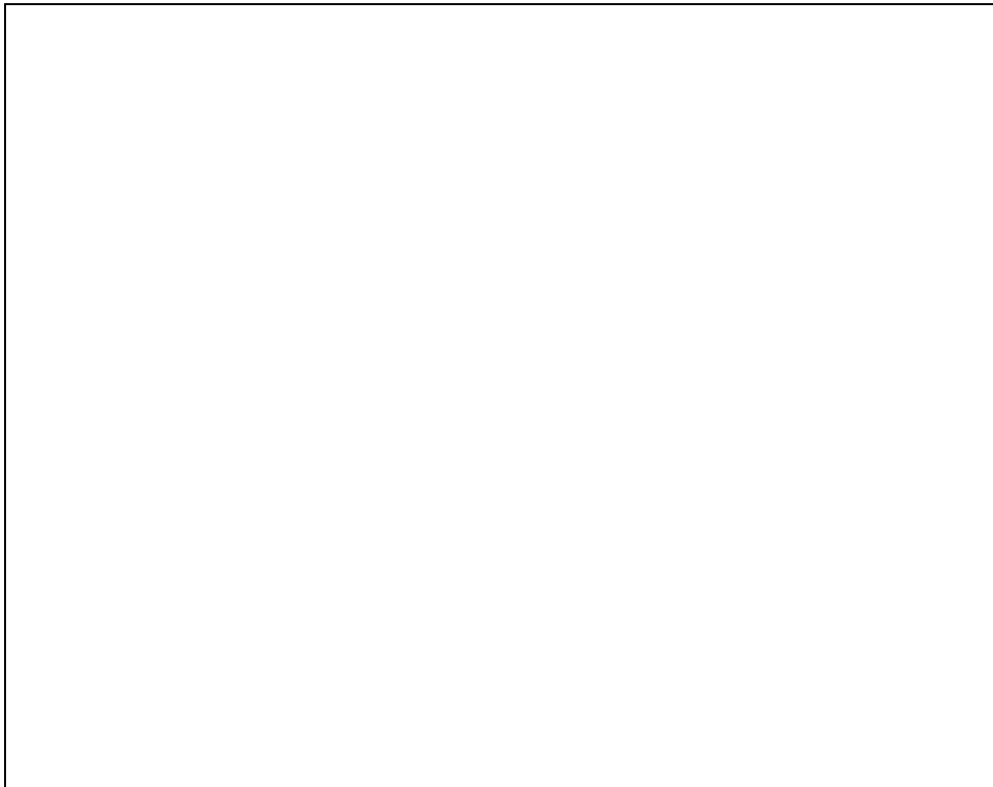
Lesson 2 Guru-tattva and Paramparā

Lesson Topics

Guru-tattva
Types of Gurus
Guru-paramparā System
Refuting the Posthumous Ritvik Theory

Guru-tattva

Briefly explain, in your own words, the position of guru.



GURU-TATTVA

The spiritual master is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa.

**guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe**

According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.

The relationship of a disciple with his spiritual master is as good as his relationship with the Supreme Lord.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.45

**ācāryaṁ mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ**

“One should know the ācārya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.17.27

If one considers the spiritual master an ordinary human being, one is doomed...

It is recommended that one honor the spiritual master as being on an equal status with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sākṣād dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ. This is enjoined in every scripture. Ācāryaṁ mām vijānīyāt [SB 11.17.27]. One should consider the ācārya to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In spite of all these instructions, if one considers the spiritual master an ordinary human being, one is doomed.

Purport, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.26

When he does his business perfectly, he is perfect..

A postman may deliver us a hundred dollars, but we do not consider that the postman is giving us a hundred dollars. The money is sent by a friend, and it is simply the postman's business to hand it over as it is, without taking anything or adding anything to it. His perfection is that he delivers the hundred dollars as it is sent by one's friend. That is his perfection. The postman may be imperfect in so many ways, but when he does his business perfectly, he is perfect....

Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-Pūjā Day Address, New Vṛndāvana, Sept. 2, 1972

Persons who are less qualified or not liberated... still can act as guru...

The statements of Thakura Bhaktivinode are as good as scriptures because he is liberated person. Generally the spiritual master comes from the group of such eternal associates of the Lord; but anyone who follows the principles of such ever liberated persons is as good as one in the above mentioned group..... A person who is liberated acharya and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acharya by strictly following the discipic succession.

Letter to: Janardana — New York 26 April, 1968

If you follow pure devotee, then you are also pure devotee.

So if you follow pure devotee, then you are also pure devotee. It may not be one is cent percent pure. Because we are trying to raise ourself from the conditional life. But if we strictly follow the pure devotee, then we are also pure devotee. So far we do, that is pure. So pure devotee does not mean one has to become immediately cent percent pure. But if he sticks to the principle that "We'll follow a pure devotee," then his actions are... He is as good as a pure devotee.

Bhagavad-gītā 2.1-10

Los Angeles, November 25, 1968

Types of Guru

Dīkṣā-guru (One)

- Gives instruction
- Initiates & officiates connection to Paramparā
- Gives spiritual name
- Gives mantra (mantra-guru)
- Accepts disciples vows
- Removes disciples sinful reactions (at initiation)

Śikṣā-guru (Many)

- Gives instruction
- Connects to Paramparā (informal)

“No limit to the number of instructing spiritual masters...”

**mantra-guru āra yata śikṣā-guru-gaṇa
tāñhāra caraṇa āge kariye vandana**

I first offer my respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of my initiating spiritual master and all my instructing spiritual masters.

PURPORT: A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master because in the scriptures 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 becomes his initiating spiritual master later on.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 1.35

The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal

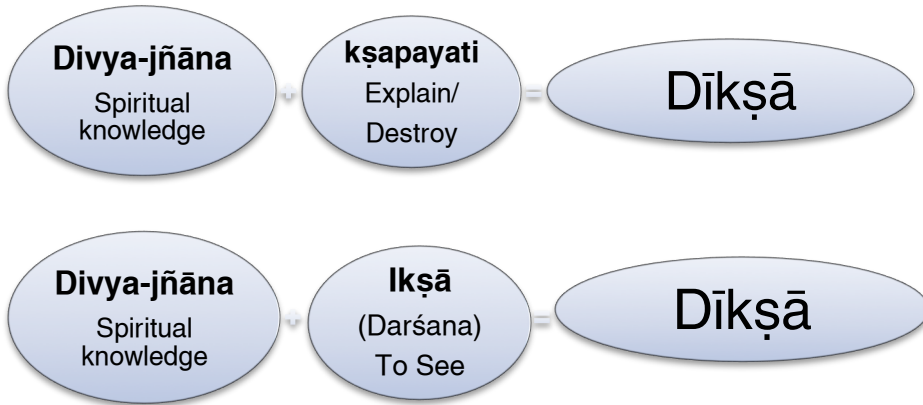
The guru who first initiates one with the mahā-mantra is to be known as the initiator, and the saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are called instructing spiritual masters. The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings.

Purport, Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 1.34

**śikṣā -guru-brnda kṛpa koriya apar
sadhake sikhān sadhaner anga-sar**

But I consider the numerous instructing spiritual masters (śikṣā -gurus) to be very important, for they show unlimitedly more mercy by training the neophyte devotees in all the essential aspects of practical devotional service (sadhana-bhakti).

Śrī Śrī Kalyāṇa Kalpa-taru Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura
First Branch: Spiritual Advice (Upadesa) Introduction: Śikṣā and Dīkṣā Gurus



“Dīkṣā means the initiation to begin transcendental activities..”

That very word initiation suggests, "This is the beginning." Dīkṣā, dīkṣā. Di... Divya. There are two words, divya-jñāna. Divya-jñāna means transcendental, spiritual knowledge. So divya is dī, and jñānam, kṣapayati, explaining, that is kṣa, dī-kṣā. This is called dīkṣā, dīkṣā, the combination. So dīkṣā means the initiation to begin transcendental activities. That is called initiation. Therefore we take promise from the disciple that "You chant so many times," "Yes, sir." "You observe these rules and regulations," "Yes, sir." That is initiation. He has to observe; he has to chant. Then everything comes automatically.

Lecture, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.1.15 -- Auckland, February 22, 1973

The Sanskrit term is called dīkṣā. Dīkṣā means... Di, divya-jñānam, transcendental knowledge, and kṣā, ikṣā. Ikṣā means darśana, to see, or kṣapayati, explain. That is called dīkṣā.

Lecture, Initiation of Bali-mardana Dāsā -- Montreal, July 29, 1968

Unless one is initiated ... all his devotional activities are useless

**adīkṣitasya vāmoru kṛtaṁ sarvaṁ nirarthakam
paśu-yonim avāpnoti dīkṣā-virahito janaḥ**

“Unless one is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, all his devotional activities are useless. A person who is not properly initiated can descend again into the animal species.”

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (2.6),

quoted from the Viṣṇu-yāmala.

Quoted in Purport Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 15.108

Connection between Kṛṣṇa and a person cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness is established.

The connection with the spiritual master is called initiation. From the date of initiation by the spiritual master, the connection between Kṛṣṇa and a person cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness is established. Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connection with Kṛṣṇa consciousness is never performed.

Nectar of Devotion Introduction

Guru-paramparā System



Evam paramparā-prāptam

This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.2

Why do we have to accept living dīkṣā gurus?



“The Paramparā System..”

The guru does not accept respect from his disciple for his personal self but conveys this respect to Kṛṣṇa.... it is stated in Bhagavad-gītā that knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is received through the paramparā, the disciplic succession. Evam paramparā-prāptam [Bg. 4.2]. The guru offers the same respects to his guru, and his guru offers respects to his, and so it goes all the way to Kṛṣṇa. Thus the mercy of Kṛṣṇa comes down through the paramparā system, and the respect offered to Kṛṣṇa is offered up through the paramparā system. One has to learn to approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead in this way...

Teachings of Lord Kapila, Chapter 13 Perfect Knowledge Through Surrender

One should approach the current link

..the message of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is coming down by disciplic succession, and in order to receive the real message of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam one should approach the current link, or spiritual master, in the chain of disciplic succession.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.7

“You cannot jump over to the superior guru...”

So if you want to understand Bhagavad-gītā, then we must understand in the same way as the person who directly heard from. This is called paramparā system. Suppose I have heard something from my spiritual master, so I speak to you the same thing. So this is paramparā system. You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called paramparā system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, neglecting the next ācārya, immediate next ācārya.

Lecture Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.15.30 -- Los Angeles, December 8, 1973

Don't try to approach Kṛṣṇa directly, jump over. That is useless.

First of all, your spiritual master, then his spiritual master, then his spiritual master, his spiritual master, his spiritual master-ultimately Kṛṣṇa. This is the process. Don't try to approach Kṛṣṇa directly, jump over. That is useless. As you receive knowledge through the steps, paramparā system, similarly, we should approach Kṛṣṇa through these step.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.4 -- Rome, May 28, 1974

One must accept a Vaisnava guru ... Not simply by reading books..

One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books... One must accept a Vaisnava guru (*adau gurv-asrayam*), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is. That is called the *parampara* system."

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līla 7.53, purp.

All these disciples which I am initiating... become future spiritual masters

These students, who are initiated from me, all of them will act as I am doing. Just like I have got many Godbrothers, they are all acting. Similarly, all these disciples which I am making, initiating, they are being trained to become future spiritual masters.

Room Conversation Detroit, July 18, 1971

I want to see my disciples become bona fide Spiritual Master

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

Letter to Tusta Kṛṣṇa, December 2, 1975

I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bona fide spiritual master

Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bona fide representative can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bona fide spiritual master to spread Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world.

Letter to: Madhusudana - Navadvīpa 2 November, 1967

“The more you become in the lower position- then more you are advanced.”

This is called paramparā system. You have to learn how to become servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa. The more you become in the lower position—servant, servant, servant, servant, servant, hundreds times servant, servant—then more you are advanced.

Lecture Bhagavad-gītā 2.2 -- London, August 3, 1973

Arguments Refuting the Posthumous Ritvik Theory

The Posthumous Ritvik Theory is a fallacious theory by which a spiritual master allegedly acts as dīkṣā-guru after his departure, through the agency of ritviks or officiating priests.

- There is no example of one taking dīkṣā from one's paraṁ-guru in any of the bona-fide Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas.
- There is no śāstric evidence indicating that one may take dīkṣā from one's paraṁ-guru.
- Virabhadra Gosvāmī, the son of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu, in a letter to Śrīnivāsa Ācārya ostracized one Jaya-gopāl from Vaiṣṇava society for claiming himself as a disciple of his Paraṁ-guru.
- The argument that there are no qualified dīkṣā-gurus amongst Prabhupāda's disciples indicates that Prabhupāda's teachings have not proven effective. So what would be the use of becoming Prabhupāda's dīkṣā disciple through the ritvik priest anyway?
Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna, khaṇḍa 3
- Ritvik theory implies that only exceptionally empowered ācāryas can become guru which is not supported in śāstra nor Vaiṣṇava tradition.
- Ritvik theory implies that ācāryas can act contrary to śāstra.
- Ritvik theory functions by undermining the natural development of faith in living Vaiṣṇavas, which is an essential aspect of bhakti.
- A ritvik guru gives advice however he does not formally accept the responsibility of delivering the disciple as a bona-fide dīkṣā-guru does.

Additional points:

GURU-TATTVA

Ācārya should be respected just like God.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura also said, sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ . Ācārya, guru, is as good as God. Sākṣād-dharitvena. Ācārya should be respected as Kṛṣṇa. Therefore ācāryam mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit [SB 11.17.27]. If somebody foolishly thinks that "They are worshiping a man. He's like me, and he has taken the seat, and he's taking worship, respect, from disciples." Sometimes they question like that. But they do not know that how ācārya should be respected. Ācārya should be respected sākṣād-dharitvena, just like God. It is not exaggeration. It is according to the śāstra. And ācārya also accepts all these respectful obeisances to carry to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.45-46 -- Vṛndāvana, October 5, 1976

Associate of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī & representation of Nityānanda Prabhu

In his prayers to the spiritual master, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura confirms that all the revealed scriptures accept the spiritual master to be identical with the Personality of Godhead because he is a very dear and confidential servant of the Lord. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas therefore worship Śrīla Gurudeva (the spiritual master) in the light of his being the servitor of the Personality of Godhead. In all the ancient literatures of devotional service and in the more recent songs of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and other unalloyed Vaiṣṇavas, the spiritual master is always considered either one of the confidential associates of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī or a manifested representation of Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.46

The spiritual master is the external manifestation of the caitya-guru...

The supreme spiritual master is Kṛṣṇa, who is therefore known as caitya-guru. This refers to the Supersoul, who is sitting in everyone's heart. He helps from within as stated in Bhagavad-gītā, and He sends the spiritual master, who helps from without. The spiritual master is the external manifestation of the caitya-guru, or the spiritual master sitting in everyone's heart.

Purport, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.44

If you follow pure devotee, then you are also pure devotee.

"We may not be cent percent perfect, but as far as possible, if we follow the instruction as it is, that much perfect. In this way one will get perfection. So one has to follow. The same example, try to understand, that a perfect, expert technologist or technician or mechanic is working, and somebody is working under his instruction. So this somebody, because he is strictly working under the instruction of the expert, he's also expert. He may not be cent percent expert, but his work is expert. Is that clear? Because he is working under the expert. Do you follow? So if you follow pure devotee, then you are also pure devotee. It may not be one is cent percent pure. Because we are trying to raise ourself from the conditional life. But if we strictly follow the pure devotee, then we are also pure devotee. So far we do, that is pure. So pure devotee does not mean one has to become immediately cent percent pure. But if he sticks to the principle that "We'll follow a pure devotee," then his actions are... He is as good as a pure devotee.

Bhagavad-gītā 2.1-10, Los Angeles, November 25, 1968

TYPES OF GURUS

“They are not many; they are one, guru-tattva..”

The guru is offered first the respectful prayers, vande gurūn. And gurūn, bahu-vacana, plural number, that many gurus. But they are not many; they are one, guru-tattva...

Lecture, Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.1 Māyāpur, March 25, 1975

Two kinds of instructing spiritual masters

śikṣā-guruke ta' jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha,—ei dui rūpa

There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.47

Dikṣā purifies ones previous sinful reactions

dikṣā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpaṇa

sei-kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kare ātma-sama

At the time of initiation, when a devotee fully surrenders unto the service of the Lord, Kṛṣṇa accepts him to be as good as Himself.

sei deha kare tāra cid-ānanda-maya

aprākṛta-dehe tānra caraṇa bhajaya

When the devotee's body is thus transformed into spiritual existence, the devotee, in that transcendental body, renders service to the lotus feet of the Lord.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya 4.192-193

Dikṣā & Śikṣā-guru

...the spiritual master who initiates according to the regulations of the śāstras is called the dikṣā-guru, and the spiritual master who gives instructions for elevation is called the śikṣā-guru.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 8.128

dikṣā-puraścaryā-vidhi apekṣā nā kare

jihvā-sparśe ā-caṇḍāla sabāre uddhāre

“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 [caṇḍāla] can be delivered.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to Satyarāja Khān, Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 15.108

The spiritual master accepts the sinful activities of his disciples

The spiritual master accepts the sinful activities of his disciples from the first initiation. I may give initiation very easily, but what can I do? I am prepared to go to hell for service of Lord.

Letter to: Jadurani — New Vrindaban 4 September, 1972

Eternal bond begins from the first day he hears.

Regarding your questions, second initiation is real initiation. First initiation is the preliminary, just to make him prepared, just like primary and secondary education. The first initiation gives him chance to become purified, and when he is actually purified then he is recognized as a brahmana and that means real initiation. The eternal bond between disciple and spiritual master begins from the first day he hears. Just like my spiritual master. In 1922 he said in our first meeting, you are educated boys, why don't you preach this cult. That was the beginning, now it is coming to fact. Therefore the relationship began from that day.

Letter to: Jadurani — New Vrindaban 4 September, 1972

First of all you become devotee of My devotee.. dāsa-dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ

We cannot jump over to Kṛṣṇa. That is another nonsense. We must approach Kṛṣṇa through guru. That is paramparā system. Kṛṣṇa is not so cheap thing that you can jump over. Somebody says, "Oh, why shall I accept guru? I can approach Kṛṣṇa directly." No. Kṛṣṇa does not accept such... Mad-bhaktaḥ pūjābhyadhikaḥ. Kṛṣṇa says that "First of all you become devotee of My devotee." Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ: "I am the servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa.

Lecture Bhagavad-gītā 2.2, London, August 3, 1973

A bona fide spiritual master directly points out the foolishness of a disciple...

A person who is puffed up by so-called education and who has no humility does not seek the protection of a bona fide spiritual master. He thinks that he does not require a spiritual master and that he can achieve the highest perfection by his own efforts. Such persons are not eligible for the study of Vedānta-sūtra. Those who are under the spell of material energy do not follow the instructions of the disciplic succession but try to manufacture something of their own and thereby step outside the sphere of Vedānta study. A bona fide spiritual master must always condemn such independent mental speculators. If the bona fide spiritual master directly points out the foolishness of a disciple, it should not be taken otherwise.

TLC 18: The Conversations with Prakāśānanda

Thakura Bhaktivinode was not official Spiritual Master of Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja

Thakura Bhaktivinode was not official Spiritual Master of Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja. Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja was already renounced order, Paramahansa, but Thakura Bhaktivinode, while He was even playing the part of a householder, was treated by Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja as Preceptor, on account of His highly elevated spiritual understanding, and thus He was always treating Him as His Spiritual Master. The Spiritual Master is divided into two parts; namely, siksa guru and diksa guru. So officially Bhaktivinode Thakura was like siksa guru of Gaura Kisora das Babaji Maharaja.

Letter to: Dayananda Allston, Mass 1 May, 1969

Disciplic succession does not mean one has to be directly a disciple.

Another point is that disciplic succession does not mean one has to be directly a disciple of a particular person. The conclusions which we have tried to explain in our Bhagavad-gita As It Is is the same as those conclusions of Arjuna. ...Another example is that a tree has many branches, and you will find one leaf here and another leaf there. But if you take this leaf and the other leaf and you press them both, you will see that the taste is the same. The taste is the conclusion, and from the taste you can understand that both leaves are from the same tree.

Letter to: Kirtanananda -- Los Angeles 25 January, 1969

The Guru is One.

The guru is one because he comes in disciplic succession. What Vyāsadeva and Kṛṣṇa taught five thousand years ago is also being taught now. There is no difference between the two instructions. Although hundreds and thousands of ācāryas have come and gone, the message is one. The real guru cannot be two, for the real guru does not speak differently from his predecessors.

Science of Self Realization 2a: Choosing a Spiritual Master What Is a Guru?

Lesson 3

Śrīla Prabhupāda - ISKCON Founder Ācārya.

Lesson Topics

Function of the Founder Ācārya
Prabhupāda the Empowered Representative of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
ISKCON in the Future

Function of the Founder Ācārya

To found:

To give a basis or firm support to.

To ground in (a subject of instruction).

To set up or establish for the first time (an institution, etc.) with provision for its perpetual existence.

Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press

List below ways Śrīla Prabhupāda functions as ISKCON's Founder- ācārya:

Śrīla Prabhupāda has a unique relationship with every ISKCON devotee.

As the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and the preeminent teacher and ultimate authority within our society, Śrīla Prabhupāda has a unique relationship with every ISKCON devotee.

303. GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda (March 2013)

Śrīla Prabhupāda:

The Empowered Representative of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

In the box below, list reasons why we accept Śrīla Prabhupāda as the empowered representative of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu for the modern age

mora senapati-bhakta

**ebe nama sankirtana tikshna khadaga laiya antara asura jivera phelibe katiya
yadi papi chadi dharma dure dese yaya mora senapati-bhakta yaibe tathaya**

Taking the sharp sword of the congregational chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra, I will root out & destroy the demoniac mentality in the hearts of all the conditioned souls. If some sinful people escape and giving up religious principles go to far off countries, then my Senapati Bhakta will come at that time to give them Krsna consciousness.

Locana Dasa Thakura in his Caitanya Mangala
(Sutra-khanda, song 12, texts 564-565)

ISKCON in The Future

What can be done to ensure that Śrīla Prabhupāda remains ISKCON's Founder Ācārya and preeminent śikṣā-guru in the future? Write your thoughts in the box below.

I am simply the bearer of the message from Lord Caitanya ...

I also thank you very much for your appreciation of my books and letters and for my speaking in the meetings. They are not my words, as I have repeatedly informed you that I am simply the bearer of the message from Lord Caitanya through the disciplic succession and I do not make any addition or subtraction. Similarly, if you all carry these words successively, then the transcendental parampara system will be exactly maintained and people in general will be benefited.

Letter to: Bhagavan — Los Angeles 10 January, 1970

Lesson 4 ISKCON Gurus

Lesson Topics

Attitude of an ISKCON Guru
Guru's and ISKCON Authorities' Instructions
Gurus outside of ISKCON

Attitude of an ISKCON Guru

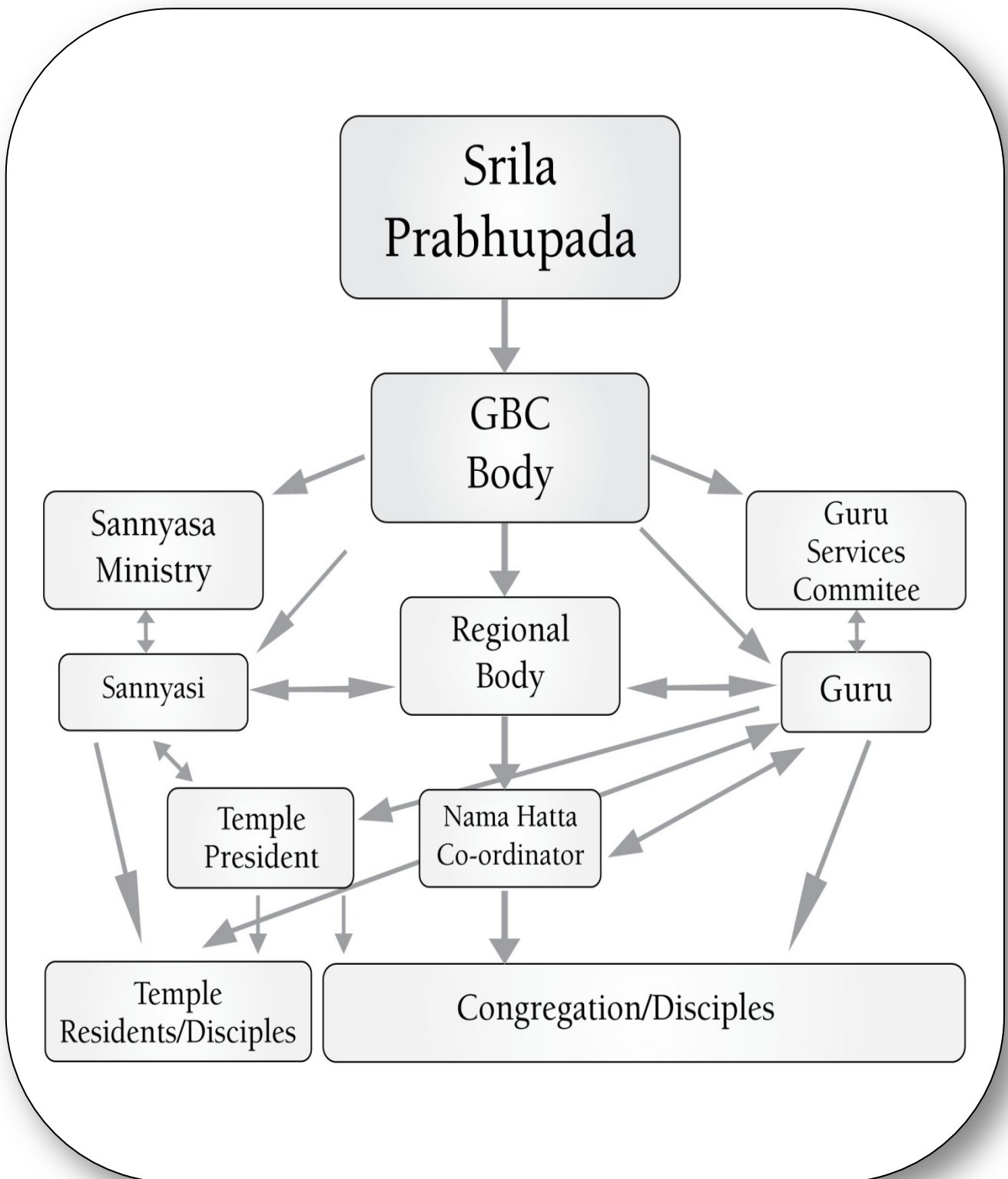
What do you consider is the appropriate attitude in general for an ISKCON guru (current and future) in regard to:

- the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda
- the authority structure within ISKCON?

Write down your thoughts....



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISKCON GURUS AND ISKCON AUTHORITIES



NOTE: The above chart is for educational purposes only and is not an administrative mandate. It illustrates that ISKCON members all serve under the direction of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the GBC. And, in ISKCON we all have multiple authorities whom we should respect and serve in a cooperative spirit.

Guru's and ISKCON Authorities' Instructions

GROUP EXERCISE:

Perform a short skit showing:

An inappropriate way of dealing with a situation where in the instructions given by one's local ISKCON authority differ from the instructions given by one's guru.

An appropriate way of dealing with a situation where in the instructions given by one's local ISKCON authority differ from the instructions given by one's guru.

Use the space below to take notes during the de-briefing on the skits

--

Gurus Outside of ISKCON

List, in the table below, some of the benefits of accepting dīkṣā and śikṣā gurus within ISKCON.

--

ATTITUDE OF AN ISKCON GURU

Service to Śrīla Prabhupāda and our guru parampara.

Those who accept the service of dīkṣā guru or śikṣa guru in ISKCON are required to be exemplary in representing Śrīla Prabhupāda's teaching in their words and personal behavior. The śikṣa guru gives spiritual instruction and inspiration on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda and our guru parampara. The dīkṣā guru gives spiritual instruction, inspiration, formal initiation, a spiritual name, and later imparts the sacred Gayatri mantras to a qualified disciple as a service to Śrīla Prabhupāda and our guru parampara.

303. GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda (March 2013)

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's governing body

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, 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 ācārya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of ācārya, and they split into two factions over who the next ācārya would be. Consequently, both factions were asāra, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 12.8

GURU'S AND ISKCON AUTHORITIES' INSTRUCTIONS

Obey Śrīla Prabhupāda but not follow the G.B.C...

"When they say they don't like ISKCON and the G.B.C., they are really saying they don't like to follow my order. That means they don't like my order. That means they don't have faith in my order. That means they don't have faith in me. That means guru-aparādha. To say they have faith in me is just hypocrisy."

8th February, 1975, ISKCON Honolulu, Hawaii
SP Lila-Addendum to SP lilamṛta—by SDG

GURUS OUTSIDE OF ISKCON

Never try to hear someone who is not in our line

Better you should stick to hearing from authorized persons, like your Spiritual Master or experienced Godbrothers. But never try to hear someone who is not in our line. It is simply a waste of time to hear and then again have to rectify the mistake.

Letter to: Hamsaduta — Hamburg 5 September, 1969

Please avoid them

"I have now issued orders that all my disciples should avoid all of my Godbrothers. They should not have any dealings with them nor even correspondence, nor should they give them any of my books or should they purchase any of their books, neither should you visit any of their temples. Please avoid them."

Letter to: Visvakarma — Bombay 9 November, 1975

"Give him prasadam, honor him as an elder Vaisnava, but he cannot speak or lecture.."

All Vaisnavas are authorities to preach Krishna Consciousness, but still, there are degrees of authorities. On the whole, if his (Bon Maharaja) motive is to suppress me and that is why he has come here, how we can receive him? He has already given one Professor a wrong impression. He may be treated as a guest, if he comes to our center, give him prasadam, honor him as an elder Vaisnava, but he cannot speak or lecture. If he wants to lecture, you can tell him that there is already another speaker scheduled. That's all."

Letter to: Satsvarupa — Honolulu 4 June, 1975

Additional Quotes Lesson 4 ISKCON Gurus

GBC

“The Governing Body Commission (GBC) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Declaration of Will, June 1977

Gaudiya Mission has failed in preaching work..

You must be engaged continually for these missionary activity. The Gaudiya Mission has failed in preaching work because they adopted this principle. As soon as they got a little shelter under the name of Matha, or temple, and a few dozen of..., not few dozen, one dozen [disciples], then he is settled up there. Now he is bhajana, ‘Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna,’ showing that he is very great chanter. And what is your preaching? . . . Therefore my Guru Maharaja condemned this policy. *Mana tumi kisera vaisnava*: ‘What kind of Vaisnava you are?’ *Pratisthara tare nirjanera ghare*: ‘And simply for cheap popularity, Oh, he is a Vaisnava. He is chanting. All right.’ . . . No botheration, because if there is no preaching, there is no botheration. You can sit down and show people, ‘I have now become a very liberated soul,’ and chant and meditate. That means sleeping. This sort of business is condemned by my Guru Maharaja. *Pratisthara tare nirjanera ghare tava harinama kevala*. This is simply cheating. He did not approve this kind of business. He did not approve. He wanted to see that everyone is engaged in preaching work..

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.18 -- Gorakhpur, February 11, 1971

Accepting the authority of the GBC was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s order

Vaisnava doctrine holds that the essential qualifying characteristic of a guru is that he follows the order of his own guru. He never becomes the master, but always remains the servant. Consequently, to be qualified as a guru in ISKCON it was essential to strictly follow the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who had decreed that all devotees must serve co-operatively under the authority of the GBC. Accepting the authority of the GBC board was not a voluntary option—because it was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s order, it was necessary to guru-hood itself.

Guru Reform—Ravindra Swarupa Dasa—ISKCON Communications Journal#2.1

The disciple must carry out the spiritual master’s instructions without deviation.

Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja comments in this connection, “One can become perfectly successful in the mission of his life if he acts exactly according to the words he hears from the mouth of his spiritual master.” This acceptance of the words of the spiritual master is called śrauta-vākya, which indicates that the disciple must carry out the spiritual master’s instructions without deviation. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura remarks in this connection that a disciple must accept the words of his spiritual master as his life and soul.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 7.72

Obey Śrīla Prabhupāda but not follow his G.B.C...

Another confrontation took place in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s room, with devotees who insisted they could faithfully obey Śrīla Prabhupāda but could not follow his G.B.C. representative or his ISKCON....The devotees in Prabhupāda’s room had formerly been leaders of ISKCON Hawaii but had left and were now threatening to use the funds and properties in their own name. Prabhupāda kept asking them simply, “Why did you leave? Why don’t you stay? Why don’t you surrender?” But they insisted that while they trusted Prabhupāda, they could not trust the G.B.C.

One of the G.B.C. members in the room became exasperated with their refusal to accept Prabhupāda's simple request of surrender. "You say that you accept Prabhupāda?"

"Yes," they replied.

"And you say you have faith in him?"

"Yes."

"You say that whatever he asks, you can follow?"

"Yes."

"So, then, if Prabhupāda asks you to follow the G.B.C., will you do it?" The room became tense and silent.

"No, we cannot follow."

When they uttered that no, Śrīla Prabhupāda dropped his fist on his table and pointed to the deviant devotees, declaring, "Just see the hypocrisy!"

Even after Prabhupāda's stark conclusion, they maintained their "we-surrender-to-you-but-not-to-ISKCON" philosophy until Prabhupāda asked them to leave. To the other devotees remaining in the room Prabhupāda remarked, "When they say they don't like ISKCON and the G.B.C., they are really saying they don't like to follow my order. That means they don't like my order. That means they don't have faith in my order. That means they don't have faith in me. That means guru-aparādha. To say they have faith in me is just hypocrisy."

8th February, 1975, Honolulu, SP Lila-Addendum to SP līlamṛta—by SDG

A disciple should always remain a fool before his spiritual master...

Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself presented the perfect example of how to be a disciple. A spiritual master knows very well how to engage each disciple in a particular duty, but if a disciple, thinking himself more advanced than his spiritual master, gives up his orders and acts independently, he checks his own spiritual progress. Every disciple must consider himself completely unaware of the science of Kṛṣṇa and must always be ready to carry out the orders of the spiritual master to become competent in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A disciple should always remain a fool before his spiritual master...

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta: Ādi-līlā 7.72

A thoughtful man must act in this way, learning to distinguish right from wrong..

We should therefore live in such a way that we keep ourselves always healthy and strong in mind and intelligence so that we can distinguish the goal of life from a life full of problems. A thoughtful man must act in this way, learning to distinguish right from wrong, and thus attain the goal of life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Purport 7.6.5

Unit Two:

Establishing the Relationship with Guru

Lesson 5 **Guru-pādāśraya**
Prabhupādāśraya
Dīkṣā /śikṣā guru-pādāśraya and Prabhupādāśraya

Lesson 6 **Selection of Guru**
Qualifications of a Bona-fide Guru
Selecting a Guru

Lesson 7 **Initiation Vows**
Strictly Following Initiation Vows
Challenges Faced Following Initiation Vows
Solutions to Challenges
Steps of Rectification

Lesson 5 Guru-pādāśraya

Lesson Topics

Prabhupādāśraya
Dīkṣā /śikṣā guru-pādāśraya

Guidelines for Prabhupādāśraya

List some specific ways we can develop a deep /authentic devotional relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda from the beginning of our spiritual life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has a unique relationship with every ISKCON devotee.

As the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and the preeminent teacher and ultimate authority within our society, Śrīla Prabhupāda has a unique relationship with every ISKCON devotee.

303. GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda (March 2013)

Instruct new members to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda

ISKCON devotees shall instruct new members to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and to receive guidance, training and assistance from those who are instructing them in Krishna consciousness. ISKCON members shall choose when and from whom they wish to request initiation. They must focus their attention on Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-Acarya and as their preeminent śikṣā guru.

ISKCON Law 7.2.1 First (Harinama) Initiation

Chant at least the first of Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranama mantras

After chanting the pranama mantra of their dīkṣā guru, all grand-disciples and future generations should chant at least the first of Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranama mantras while offering obeisances as a means of respecting the Founder-Acarya.

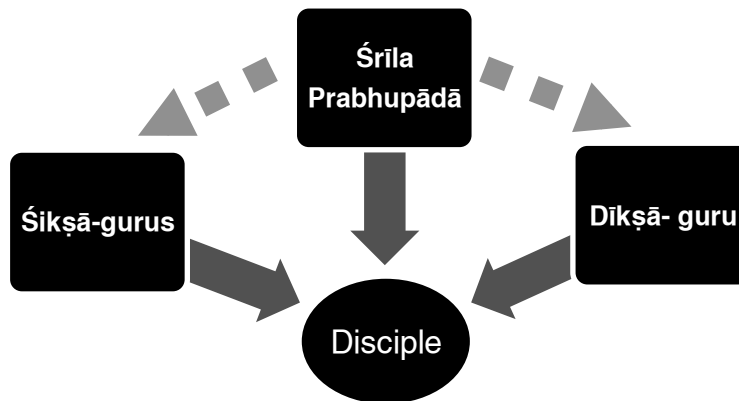
ISKCON Law 7.2.1 First (Harinama) Initiation

Dikṣā /śikṣā Guru-pādāśraya and Prabhupādāśraya

What is the relationship between dikṣā /śikṣā guru-pādāśraya and Prabhupādāśraya?

Guru-pādāśraya in ISKCON

A disciple in ISKCON should take shelter from three sources:



Śikṣā-guru not speaking something against the teachings of the dikṣā-guru...

Sometimes a dikṣā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, from an advanced devotee. That is called the śikṣā-guru. Śikṣā-guru does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the dikṣā-guru. He is not a śikṣā-guru. He is a rascal.

Bhagavad-gītā 17.1-3 -- Honolulu, July 4, 1974

A devotee is delivered through a combination of various manifestations of His mercy.

As such, a devotee is ultimately delivered by Sri Krishna acting through a combination of various manifestations of His mercy. These include, but are not limited to, the caitya guru, Śrīla Prabhupāda, the guru parampara, one's dikṣā guru, other śikṣa gurus, the Holy Name, sastra, and the nine processes of devotional service.

303. GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda (March 2013)

Spiritually mature ISKCON managers may be main śikṣā gurus..

Spiritually mature managers may be the main śikṣā gurus for devotees who are not their initiated disciples, and such relationships are to be fully encouraged by the initiating spiritual masters.

Harmonizing ISKCON's Lines of Authority (Page 83)

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the preeminent Śikṣā-guru for all members of ISKCON.

Within these cooperative elements, Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, is the preeminent śikṣā-guru for all members of ISKCON. All members of ISKCON, for all generations, are encouraged to seek shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda. All members of ISKCON are entitled and encouraged to have a personal relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda through his books, teachings, service, and his ISKCON society.

303. GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda (March 2013)

Lesson 6 Selecting Guru

Lesson Topics

Qualifications of a Bona-fide Guru
Selecting a Guru

What are you looking for in a Guru?

Qualifications of a Bona-fide Guru

What are the qualifications of a bona-fide Guru? Take notes from the discussion, in the box below:

QUALIFICATIONS OF A BONA-FIDE GURU

**vāco vegaṁ manasaḥ krodha-vegaṁ jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam
etān vegān yo viśaheta dhīraḥ sarvām apīmāṁ pṛthiviṁ sa śiṣyāt**

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

Upadeśāmṛta Verse 1

Two qualifications...

**tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham**

To understand these things properly, one must humbly approach, with firewood in hand, a spiritual master who is learned in the Vedas and firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12

A bona fide guru does not impart some self-styled, concocted knowledge; his knowledge is standard and received from the paramparā system. He is also firmly fixed in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (brahma-niṣṭham). These are his two qualifications: he must have heard the Vedic knowledge through the disciplic succession, and he must be established in service to the Supreme Lord. He does not have to be a very learned scholar, but he must have heard from the proper authority.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, Verse 4, Approaching a Bona Fide Guru

Selecting a Guru

List, in the box below, some inappropriate reasons for selecting a guru.

Steps for Selecting Guru

The following steps are adapted from ISKCON Law regarding steps toward initiation. The laws are presented in full in Appendix 5, Page 72.



One Year Preparatory Period

- Engage favorably in devotional service
- Strictly follow 4 regulative principles
- Chant sixteen rounds a day
- Attend full morning program (temple resident)
- Attend morning program at home or Nām-haṭṭa (non temple resident)

Prabhupādāśraya,

- Focus attention on Śrīla Prabhupāda as preeminent śikṣā guru.
- Chant Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranama mantras while offering obeisances
- Receive guidance from respective ISKCON spiritual authorities (śikṣā gurus)
- Complete ISKCON Disciple Course

Dikṣā & Śikṣā Guru-pādāśraya

- After a minimum of six months of following the above, one may select an ISKCON authorized dikṣā guru, from amongst ones established śikṣā gurus. Note that six months is the minimum period, and one may take as much time as required to make this selection.
- Responsibility of candidates to choose guru by the exercise of their own intelligence.
- Notify the local Temple President or relevant authority
- Take written examination issued by ISKCON authority
- Receive formal letter of recommendation from ISKCON authority
- Receive permission from the selected guru
- Begin to worship that guru and chant his pranama-mantra (followed by at least the first of Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranama mantras)
- In addition to taking instruction from ones selected dikṣā guru, one continues to take instruction from ones established śikṣā gurus.
- Communicate to guru and local authorities if one decides to aspire for initiation from another ISKCON guru.

Hari-nāma Initiation

- After a subsequent minimum of six months, one may accept Vaiṣṇava dikṣā.
- The guru is under no obligation to initiate a candidate.
- After initiation one may accept additional śikṣā gurus, with the permission of one's dikṣā guru.

Personal Behavior and Preaching

**ācāra', 'pracāra',—nāmera karaha 'dui' kārya
tumi—sarva-guru, tumi jagatera ārya**

"You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and by your preaching. Therefore you are the spiritual master of the entire world, for you are the most advanced devotee in the world."

Purport: Sanātana Gosvāmī clearly defines herein the bona fide spiritual master of the world. The qualifications expressed in this connection are that one must act according to the scriptural injunctions and at the same time preach. One who does so is a bona fide spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya 4.103

From any āśrama

**kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya
yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya**

Whether one is a brāhmaṇa, a sannyāsī or a śūdra—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 8.128

Every one of you become the spiritual master

**āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa
yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa**

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Madhya 7.128

Lord Caitanya says that "Every one of you become the spiritual master, every one of you. Why one, two? Every one of you." "Oh, spiritual master is very difficult job." No. No difficult job. Caitanya Mahā... Āmāra ājñāya: "Just try to carry out My order. That's all. Then you become spiritual master."

Bhagavad-gītā 4.1-2 -- Columbus, May 9, 1969

"On My order." That is the crucial point.

So how everyone can become a spiritual master? A spiritual master must have sufficient knowledge, so many other qualifications. No. Even without any qualifications, one can become a spiritual master. How? Now the process is, Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, āmāra ājñāya: "On My order." That is the crucial point. One does not become spiritual master by his own whims. That is not spiritual master. He must be ordered by superior authority. Then he's spiritual master. Āmāra ājñāya. Just like in our case. Our superior authority, our spiritual master, he ordered me that "You just try to preach this gospel, whatever you have learned from me, in English." So we have tried it. That's all. It is not that I am very much qualified. The only qualification is that I have tried to execute the order of superior authority. That's all. This is the secret of success.

Bhagavad-gītā 2.2, London, Aug 3, 1973

SELECTION OF GURU

We should not accept a guru suddenly out of fanaticism. That is very dangerous

The s̄astras enjoin that before we take a guru we study him carefully to find out whether we can surrender to him. We should not accept a guru suddenly out of fanaticism. That is very dangerous. The guru should also study the person who wants to become a disciple to see if he is fit. That is the way a relationship is established between the guru and disciple...

Science of Self Realization 2a: What Is a Guru?

Meet together at least for one year...

In Hari-bhakti-vilāsa by Sanātana Gosvāmī it is directed that the spiritual master and the disciple must meet together at least for one year so that the disciple may also understand that "Here is a person whom I can accept as my guru," and the guru also can see that "Here is a person who is fit for becoming my disciple." Then the business is nice.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.16.25 -- Hawaii, January 21, 1974

One must hear him at least for one year

So therefore the process is before accepting a guru, one must hear him at least for one year. And when he's convinced that "Here is actually a guru who can teach me," then you accept him, guru. Don't accept whimsically.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.16.25 -- Hawaii, January 21, 1974

One must not bring upon himself the calamity of having to reject his spiritual master.

The scriptures recommend that both the spiritual master and the disciple place each other under strict scrutiny before mutual acceptance....Since even ordinary household items are tested before acquisition, it is only an unfortunate fool who will fail to go through a testing period in the selection of his true spiritual master, who is the best friend of the living entities. ...The point is that one must not bring upon himself the calamity of having to reject his spiritual master. If one is prudent, he can avoid such a situation

Harināma Cintamani—6

One should not accept a spiritual master in terms of social conventions...

It is imperative that a serious person accept a bona fide spiritual master in terms of the s̄āstric injunctions. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī advises that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or customary social and ecclesiastical conventions. One should simply try to find a genuinely qualified spiritual master for actual advancement in spiritual understanding.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adī 1.35 purport

Correctly choose, by the exercise of their own intelligence...

It is the personal responsibility of candidates for initiation to correctly choose, by the exercise of their own intelligence, a particular devotee as spiritual master. Candidates for initiation should accept initiation from a spiritual master only after developing firm and mature faith in that devotee and in his ability to take them back to Godhead. Sadhu, shastra, and guru are the authoritative references to apply in ascertaining the level of advancement of a devotee. Receiving official ISKCON guru approval signifies that the devotee has successfully completed the authorization process set forth in ISKCON law, and that in the judgment of certain senior devotees the candidate measures up to the standards and guidelines given in ISKCON law. However, such approval is not automatically to be taken as a statement about the degree of God-realization of the approved guru, and it is not intended to replace the intelligent discrimination of the candidate.

ISKCON Law 7.2 Responsibility of Candidate for Initiation

QUALIFICATIONS OF A BONA-FIDE GURU

**tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam
śābde pare ca niṣṇātām brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam**

Therefore any person who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the bona fide guru is that he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, should be understood to be bona fide spiritual master
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.21

SELECTION OF GURU

A disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as a spiritual master.

When a person realizes himself to be an eternal servitor of Kṛṣṇa, he loses interest in everything but Kṛṣṇa's service. Always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, devising means by which to spread the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, he understands that his only business is in spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. Such a person is to be recognized as an uttama-adhikārī, and his association should be immediately accepted according to the six processes (dadāti pratigrhṇāti, etc.). Indeed, the advanced uttama-adhikārī Vaiṣṇava devotee should be accepted as a spiritual master. Everything one possesses should be offered to him, for it is enjoined that one should deliver whatever he has to the spiritual master...

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has given some practical hints to the effect that an uttama-adhikārī Vaiṣṇava can be recognized by his ability to convert many fallen souls to Vaiṣṇavism.In this verse Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises the devotee to be intelligent enough to distinguish between the kaniṣṭha-adhikārī, madhyama-adhikārī and uttama-adhikārī....One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava 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-adhikārī as a spiritual master.

Upadeśāmṛta Verse 5 Purport

You don't require large definition, what is guru

You don't require large definition, what is guru. So Vedic knowledge gives you indication that tad-vijñānārtham. If you want to know the science of spiritual life, tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum eva abhigacchet [MU 1.2.12], you must approach guru. And who is guru? Guru means who is the faithful servant of God. Very simple.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.1.26-27, Philadelphia, July 12th, 1975

Lesson 7 Initiation Vows

Lesson Topics

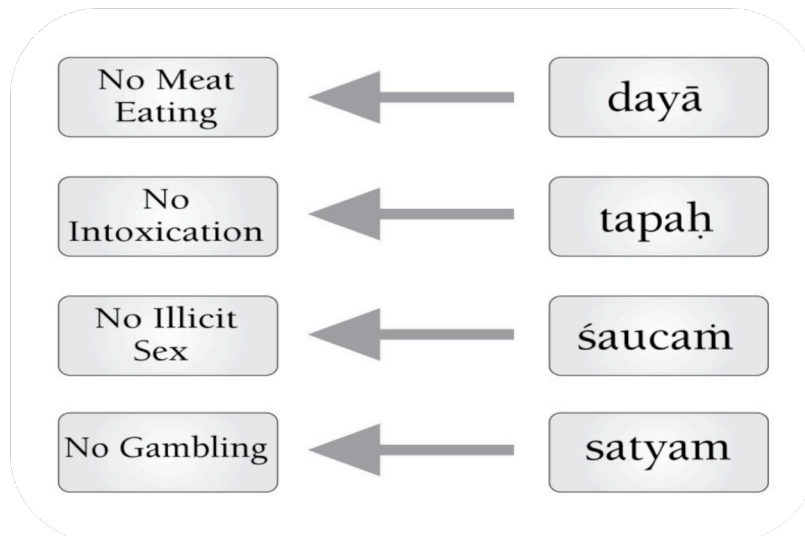
Qualities of a Disciple
Strictly Following Initiation Vows
Challenges Faced Following Initiation Vows
Solutions to Challenges
Steps of Rectification

Qualities of a Disciple

The servant or disciple of the spiritual master should be free from false prestige, never considering himself to be the doer. He should feel enmity toward no one, should be active and never lazy, and should give up all sense of proprietorship over the objects of the senses, including his wife, children, home and society. He should be endowed with feelings of loving friendship toward the spiritual master and should never become deviated or bewildered. The servant or disciple should always desire advancement in spiritual understanding, should not envy anyone and should always avoid useless conversation.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.10.6

Importance of following Initiation Vows



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.17.24

I cannot give you protection. That is not possible.

It is not very difficult to follow the four regulative principles... These things should be stopped if you'll want to be serious; otherwise make a farce and do whatever you like. I cannot give you protection. That is not possible. So you must have to follow these rules and regulation if you are serious. Then take initiation. Otherwise don't make farce, don't make farce. That is my request.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.16.35 -- Hawaii, January 28, 1974

Otherwise they are not my disciples

My advice is always chant 16 rounds minimum and follow the four regulative principles. All of my disciples must agree on this point otherwise they are not my disciples...My disciples must follow these principles living either in heaven or hell.

Letter to: Raja Laksmi — Mayapur 17 February, 1976

Solutions to Challenges

Write, in the box below, some helpful solutions to challenges faced in strictly following initiation vows.

Tapasya for forcing you to make very rapid advancement in Krsna conscious

If still you are unable to fulfill that promise to your spiritual master, then what is the use of calling yourself devotee and disciple? That is simply pretending. So you should think like this, that I have promised my spiritual master this, now I must obey him without any exception, otherwise I have no business calling myself his disciple. That will be your austerity or tapasya for forcing you to make very rapid advancement in Krsna conscious understanding. Without tapasya there is no question of making advancement. ... You must avoid these four basic principle restrictions under all circumstances, without any exceptions. Of course once, twice, Krsna may excuse, that is not very difficult, but more than that it will become very difficult for Krsna to excuse you and there is great risk that everything will be lost despite all of your time and effort spent.

Letter to: Sankarasana — Bombay 31 December, 1972

Defying means to disconnect the relationship with the Spiritual Master.

You have asked if it is true that the Spiritual Master remains in the material universe until all of His disciples are transferred to the Spiritual Sky. The answer is yes, this is the rule. Therefore, every student should be very much careful not to commit any offense which will be detrimental to this promotion to the Spiritual Kingdom, and thereby the Spiritual Master has to incarnate again to deliver him. This sort of mentality will be a kind of offense to the Spiritual Master. Out of the ten kinds of offenses, the number one offense is to disobey the orders of the Spiritual Master. The instructions given to the disciple by the Spiritual Master at the time of initiation should be strictly followed. That will make one advance to the spiritual path. But if one deliberately defies such instructions, then his advancement is hampered from the very beginning. This defying means to disconnect the relationship with the Spiritual Master. And anyone who defies and therefore disconnects the relationship with the Spiritual Master can hardly expect the assistance of the Spiritual Master life after life. I hope this will clear up this question sufficiently for you.

Letter to: Jayapataka — Los Angeles 11 July, 1969

If I pour water on it, then it will be difficult to ignite

Of course, this chanting of hari-nāma will make you purified. That's nice. But just like this fire I am going to ignite. This is dry firewood. But if I help it, to keep it dry, then the fire will be very nice, blazing fire. But if I pour water on it, then it will be difficult to ignite. Similarly, the fire of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will keep you always progressing, but at the same time, if we also voluntarily do not pour water on that fire, then it will be nice. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa consciousness or chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa will keep you progressive. At the same time, voluntarily, if you do not commit all these nonsenses, then it will be very nice. And if you continue this water pouring, then... Just like a man is taking medicine at the same time doing all nonsense. Then his disease will not be cured, or may take very, very long time. So we should not be irresponsible in that way because life is very short.

Initiation lecture San Francisco, 10th Mar, 1968

Lord Caitanya accepts all kinds of sinful persons on the one condition

When the Lord was invoking His Sudarśana cakra and Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu was imploring Him to forgive the two brothers, both the brothers fell down at the lotus feet of the Lord and begged His pardon for their gross behavior. The Lord was also asked by Nityānanda Prabhu to accept these repenting souls, and the Lord agreed to accept them on one condition, that they henceforward completely give up all their sinful activities and habits of debauchery. Both the brothers agreed and promised to give up all their sinful habits, and the kind Lord accepted them and did not again refer to their past misdeeds. This is the specific kindness of Lord Caitanya. In this age no one can say that he is free from sin. It is impossible for anyone to say this. But Lord Caitanya accepts all kinds of sinful persons on the one condition that they promise not to indulge in sinful habits after being spiritually initiated by the bona fide spiritual master ... in this Kali-yuga practically all people are of the quality of Jagāi and Mādhāi. If they want to be relieved from the reactions of their misdeeds, they must take shelter of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and after spiritual initiation thus refrain from those things which are prohibited in the śāstras.

Introduction to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

Purifying process is already there in the heart of the devotee

According to the Vedas, there is a certain regulation that if one falls down from his exalted position he has to undergo certain ritualistic processes to purify himself. But here there is no such condition, because the purifying process is already there in the heart of the devotee, due to his remembering the Supreme Personality of Godhead constantly. Therefore, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare should be continued without stoppage.

Bhagavad-gītā 9.31

Then you are not even a gentleman, what to speak about devotee.

Hṛdayānanda: (translating) He wants to know if the greatest offense is to disobey the guru.
Prabhupāda: Yes, that is the first offense. Guror avajñā, śruti-śāstra-nindanam. Śruti-śāstra-nindanam guror avajñā. If you accept guru and again disobey him, then what is your position? You are not a gentleman. You promise before guru, before Kṛṣṇa, before fire, that "I shall obey your order; I shall execute this," and again you do not do this. Then you are not even a gentleman, what to speak about devotee. This is common sense.

Bhagavad-gītā 2.11 Mexico, February 11, 1975

Unit 3:

Acting in Relationship with the Guru

Lesson 8

Guru-pūjā

Regular Worship of Śrīla Prabhupāda
The Importance of Guru-pūjā
Formal Worship of ISKCON Gurus
Vyāsa-pūjā

Lesson 9

Guru- sevā

Qualifications of a Disciple
Guru-sevā and Service to ISKCON
Meeting Obligations in a Balanced Manner

Lesson 10

Guru vapu and vāṇī-sevā

Methods of Guru Vapuḥ and Vāṇī-sevā
Importance of Guru Vapuḥ-sevā
Behaving Appropriately in the Presence of the Guru
Inquiring From Guru
Importance of Guru-vāṇī-sevā

Lesson 11

Guru-tyāga (Rejection of the Spiritual master)

Principles and Procedures of Guru-tyāga
Procedures of Lodging Complaints Concerning Guru
Re-initiation
Continuing to Practice Devotion Service, in ISKCON

Lesson 8 Guru-pūjā

Lesson Topics

Regular Worship of Śrīla Prabhupāda
The Importance of Guru-pūjā
Formal Worship of ISKCON Gurus
Vyāsa-pūjā

The Importance of Guru-pūjā

**sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ**

The spiritual master is honored as much as the Supreme Lord because he is the most confidential servitor of the Lord.

Śrī Śrī Gurv-aṣṭaka Verse 7

**ārādhanaṅgāṁ sarveṣāṁ viṣṇor ārādhanaṁ param
tasmāt parataraṁ devi tadyānāṁ samarcanam**

“[Lord Śiva told the goddess Durgā:] ‘My dear Devī, although the Vedas recommend worship of demigods, the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is topmost. However, above the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is the rendering of service to Vaiṣṇavas, who are related to Lord Viṣṇu.’

From Padma Purāṇa, Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 11.31

**ye me bhakta-jaṅgāḥ pārtha na me bhaktās ca te jaṅgāḥ
mad-bhaktāṅgāḥ ca ye bhaktās te me bhakta-tamaḥ matāḥ**

“[Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna:] ‘Those who are My direct devotees are actually not My devotees, but those who are the devotees of My servant are factually My devotees.’

From Ādi Purāṇa, Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 11.28

It is not self aggrandizement; it is real teaching

So this guru-pūjā which we are doing, it is not self aggrandizement; it is real teaching. You sing daily, what is that? Guru-mukha-padma-vākya āra nā kariyā aikya . Bas, this is translation. I tell you frankly, whatever little success is there in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, I simply believed what was spoken by my Guru Mahārāja. You also continue that. Then every success will come.

Arrival Address -- New York, July 9, 1976

List some of the benefits of regular Guru-pūjā.

Formal Worship of ISKCON Gurus

Pranama mantras

After chanting the pranama mantra of their dīkṣā guru, all grand-disciples and future generations should chant at least the first of Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranama mantras while offering obeisances as a means of respecting the Founder-Acarya.

ISKCON Law 7.2.1

Offering ārātrika

While performing arati in the temple or at temple-related functions, a pujari may keep a small picture of his or her dīkṣā guru on the arati tray or table instead of on the altar, provided the dīkṣā guru is an ISKCON-approved guru in good standing. The picture of the dīkṣā guru should be smaller in size than the picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda on the altar and it shall be removed after the arati.

ISKCON Law 6.4.8.3. a)

Guru-pūjā (for current ISKCON Dīkṣā gurus)

The disciples of ISKCON gurus other than Śrīla Prabhupāda may offer guru-pūjā to their gurus outside the temple room. The temple should provide facility for these disciples' worship.

ISKCON Law 6.4.8.1.1

Restricted Titles

No one in ISKCON will be addressed publicly with the honorific title "His Divine Grace" nor be addressed either publicly or privately by the honorifics ending in "-pada" or "-deva". Disciples may address their ISKCON dīkṣā or śikṣā gurus as "Gurudeva" or "Guru-Maharaja".

ISKCON Law 6.4.8.

Welcoming Vaisnavas

Events welcoming Vaisnavas, including those serving as gurus, to ISKCON temples should be modest. For example, offering of a sitting place, offering of prasadam and something to drink, presentation of a garland, and performance of kirtana.

ISKCON Law 6.4.8.2

Vyāsa-pūjā

Note down some reflections about attending a Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony below:

Vyasa-puja for ISKCON Current Dīkṣā and Śikṣā Gurus

In order to focus more fully on Śrīla Prabhupāda and every devotee's special relationship with him, an ISKCON śikṣā or dīkṣā guru may accept public guru-puja (arati and/or foot bathing) in person once a year on ISKCON property on his or her Vyāsa-pūjā. This celebration may be held in the temple room. ISKCON members conducting Vyāsa-pūjā ceremonies for ISKCON gurus shall observe them in a modest way, significantly less elaborate than Śrīla Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā. In general, devotees shall observe these Vyāsa-pūjā celebrations in their own locales. In ISKCON, Vyāsa-pūjā books may be published only for Śrīla Prabhupāda.

ISKCON Law 6.4.8.1

Note

It generally considered a violation of Vaisnava etiquette for disciples to request the spiritual master's godbrothers/godsisters to write an offering for, offer praise during, or participate in the Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony for their spiritual master.

Recommendation of GBC Guru Services Committee

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā & Tirobhāva-tithi

ISKCON members shall celebrate Śrīla Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā (&Tirobhāva) ceremony as the preeminent Vyāsa-pūjā (&Tirobhāva) ceremony in ISKCON. All ISKCON members are requested to write an annual Vyāsa-pūjā offering to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

ISKCON Law 6.4.8

Additional Quotes Lesson 8 Guru-pūjā

Honor the picture of the Guru

There is no difference between me and my picture. Therefore we should honor and keep pictures in that spirit. If we throw pictures this way and that way, that is offense. The name and picture are as good as the person in spiritual world.

Letter to: Jadurani — New Vrindaban 4 September, 1972

Spiritual Master's Appearance Day is worshiped as Vyasa Puja

The ripened fruit is received hand to hand through disciplic succession and anyone who does this work in disciplic succession from Śrīla Vyasadeva is considered as representative of Vyasadeva and as such the bona fide Spiritual Master's Appearance Day is worshiped as Vyasa Puja. The exalted seat on which the Spiritual Master sits is also called Vyasasana.

Letter to: Bali-mardana — Tokyo 25 August, 1970

Not a single of the jewels or contribution the viceroy could touch...

So this Vyāsa-pūjā means one day in a year, on the birthday of the spiritual master, because he is representative of Vyāsa, he is delivering the same knowledge which has come down by disciplic succession without any change, he is offered the respect. This is called Vyāsa-pūjā. And the spiritual master receives all honor, all contribution, on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not for his person. Just like in our country when there was British rule, there was a viceroy, a king's representative. So naturally, when viceroy used to go to some meeting, many people used to present valuable jewels, valuable, because just to honor him. But the law was that not a single of the jewels or contribution the viceroy could touch. It was going to the royal treasury. The viceroy could accept on behalf of the king all contribution, but it goes to the king. Similarly, this day, Vyāsa-pūjā day, whatever honor, contribution and feelings is being offered to the spiritual master, it is... Again, as we have received the knowledge from upwards, similarly, this respect also goes from downward to the upward. This is the process. So as the spiritual master is teacher of the student, he has to teach the disciple how to send back his respect and contribution to God. This is called Vyāsa-pūjā.

Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā -- New Vrindaban, September 2, 1972

The secret of Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā

Herein lies the secret of Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā. When we meditate on the transcendental pastimes of the Absolute Godhead, we are proud to feel that we are His eternal servitors, and we become jubilant and dance with joy. All glory to my divine master, for it is he who has out of his unceasing flow of mercy stirred up within us such a movement of eternal existence. Let us bow down at his lotus feet.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Vyāsa-pūjā
Homage to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Ṭhākura, Bombay, February 1935.

Lesson 9 Guru-sevā

Lesson Topics:

Qualifications of a Disciple
Guru-sevā and Service to ISKCON
Meeting Obligations in a Balanced Manner

Sevayā

Just like if you purchase something, you must pay for it. Therefore it is called Sevayā. You cannot pay by returning the value, which is taught by the spiritual master. That is not possible. Therefore it is called Sevayā. Dedicate your life for his service. You cannot pay. What you have got to pay to a spiritual master?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.25 Los Angeles, June 23, 1972

Guru-sevā and Service to ISKCON

List in the table below:

Ways we can serve the mission of ISKCON?	Ways we can serve our guru?

Comment on the importance of a balanced approach to rendering guru-sevā and service to the mission of ISKCON.

Meeting Obligations in a Balanced Manner

List some of the obligations I have in life, in addition to obligations to my guru:

Suggest solutions to challenges faced in fulfilling obligations to guru and others in a balanced manner.

Duty of disciple to carry out order ... spread Lord Caitanya's message all over the world.

**pr̥thivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma
sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma**

(Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata Antya-khaṇḍa 4.126)

The devotees of Lord Caitanya must preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in every village and town in the world. That will satisfy the Lord. It is not that one should act whimsically for his own personal satisfaction. This order comes down through the paramparā system, and the spiritual master presents these orders to the disciple so that he can spread the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It is the duty of every disciple to carry out the order of the bona fide spiritual master and spread Lord Caitanya's message all over the world.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Purport, Madhya-līlā 16.64

**tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ**

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

Such a spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant, without false prestige. Satisfaction of the self-realized spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.34

If there is no surrendering, then it is no advancement

Our movement is that beginning of spiritual life is to surrender. If there is no surrendering, then it is no advance. Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja [Bg. 18.66]. This is the beginning. If that thing is lacking, there is no beginning even, what to speak of advancement. That is discussed already. Na siddhiṁ sa avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na paraṁ gatiḥ. This is the beginning of spiritual life. The word is called disciple. Disciple means who accept discipline. If there is no discipline, where is disciple?

Room Conversation—July 1st 1974, Melbourne

One must strictly try to execute the order.

The principle of very rigidly carrying out the order of the spiritual master must be observed. The spiritual master gives different orders to different people. For example, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu ordered Jīva Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī to preach, and He ordered Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to strictly follow the rules and regulations of the renounced order. All six Gosvāmīs strictly followed the instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is the principle for progress in devotional service. After receiving an order from the spiritual master, one must strictly try to execute the order. That is the way of success.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya 6.312

In this way the bhakti-latā shrivels up.

Giving up the regulative principles and living according to one's whims is compared to a mad elephant, which by force uproots the bhakti-latā and breaks it to pieces. In this way the bhakti-latā shrivels up. Such an offense is especially created when one disobeys the instructions of the spiritual master. This is called guru-avajñā. The devotee must therefore be very careful not to commit offenses against the spiritual master by disobeying his instructions. As soon as one is deviated from the instructions of the spiritual master, the uprooting of the bhakti-latā begins, and gradually all the leaves dry up.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 19.156

The order of the spiritual master is the life substance of the disciple.

After being initiated and receiving the orders of the spiritual master, the disciple should unhesitatingly think about the instructions or orders of the spiritual master and should not allow himself to be disturbed by anything else. This is also the verdict of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, who, while explaining a verse of Bhagavad-gītā (vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.41), points out that the order of the spiritual master is the life substance of the disciple. The disciple shouldn't consider whether he is going back home, back to Godhead; his first business should be to execute the order of the spiritual master. Thus a disciple should always meditate on the order of the spiritual master, and that is perfectional meditation. Not only should he meditate upon that order, but he should find out the means by which he can perfectly worship and execute it.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.24.15

Disciple, which is related to the word discipline.

To accept a spiritual master means to voluntarily agree to abide by the rules and regulations given by a great personality. This is what being a disciple means—to voluntarily agree, "Yes, sir. Whatever you say, I accept." The Sanskrit word śiṣya means "one who abides by the rules," and in English there is the word disciple, which is related to the word discipline. So a disciple becomes disciplined by the spiritual master. "Even at the inconvenience of my personal comfort, I must abide by the orders of my spiritual master."

lecture 5.5.1-Tittenhurst, London, 12th Sep, 1969

Take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and to serve him with heart and soul.

For spiritual achievement the easiest path is to take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and to serve him with heart and soul. That is the secret of success. As stated by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his eight stanzas of prayer to the spiritual master, yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ. By serving or receiving the grace of the spiritual master, one receives the grace of the Supreme Lord. By serving her devotee-husband, Kardama Muni, Devahūti shared in his achievements. Similarly, a sincere disciple, simply by serving a bona fide spiritual master, can achieve all the mercy of the Lord and the spiritual master simultaneously.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.23.7

Stick to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master

If a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by vāṇī or vapuḥ. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush of Vṛndāvana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.51

When you are helping my missionary activitiesThat is real association.

You write that you have desire to avail of my association again, but why do you forget that you are always in association with me? When you are helping my missionary activities I am always thinking of you and you are always thinking of me. That is real association.

Letter to: Govinda — Los Angeles 17 August, 1969

I am with you as My Guru Maharaja is with me

The Spiritual Master is present wherever his sincere disciple is trying to serve his instructions. This is possible by the Mercy of Kṛṣṇa. In your attempts to serve me and in all your sincere devotional sentiments I am with you as My Guru Maharaja is with me. Remember this always.

Letter to: Bhakta Don — Los Angeles 1 December, 1973

Lesson 10 Guru Vapuḥ and Vāṇī-sevā

Lesson Topics:

Methods of Guru Vapuḥ and Vāṇī-sevā
Importance of Guru Vapuḥ-sevā
Behaving Appropriately in the Presence of the Guru
Inquiring From Guru
Importance of Guru-vāṇī-sevā

Vapuḥ
Physical Body

Vāṇī
Instructions

**sādhu-saṅga', 'sādhu-saṅga'—sarva-śāstre kaya
lava-mātra sādhu-saṅge sarva-siddhi haya**

The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment's association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 22.54

Behaving Appropriately in the Presence of the Guru

Rules of Etiquette for a Disciple from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa

- He should fall down like an uprooted tree (dāṇḍavāt) on seeing the spiritual master.
- When guru approaches he should face him and when he leaves, he should follow him.
- He should not leave the spiritual master's presence without asking permission.
- He should not utter the spiritual master's name inattentively, but always with respect.
- He should not imitate the gait, activities or voice of the spiritual master.
- He should always hold the spiritual master's words in great respect.
- Though he may be punished by the spiritual master, he should not take it unkindly.
- He should not bear to hear criticism of the spiritual master, the scriptures or the Lord, but should leave the place immediately.
- He should not step on the spiritual master's garland, bed, shoes, asana, shadow or table.
- He should not spread his legs before the spiritual master, nor should he yawn, laugh or make disrespectful noises before him.
- He should not sit on an āsana or bed before the spiritual master.
- He should not worship others in preference to the spiritual master.
- He should not give dikṣa, scriptural explanations or show superiority in front of the guru.
- He should not give orders to the spiritual master, but always obey him.
- He should treat the spiritual master's spiritual master with similar respect.
- He should treat the wife, son and relatives of the spiritual master as the spiritual master, but he should not clean the body of the son, take his remnants or wash his feet.

Qualifications of a Bona Fide Disciple from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (from Pañcarātra-Pradīpa)

Personally serve the spiritual master by giving him bodily comforts..

The words guru-śuśrūṣayā mean that one should personally serve the spiritual master by giving him bodily comforts, helping him in bathing, dressing, sleeping, eating and so on. This is called guru-śuśrūṣaṇam. A disciple should serve the spiritual master as a menial servant, and whatever he has in his possession should be dedicated to the spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.30-31

As hard as a thunderbolt and as soft as a rose

An ācārya, or great personality of the Vaiṣṇava school, is very strict in his principles, but although he is as hard as a thunderbolt, sometimes he is as soft as a rose. Thus actually he is independent.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 7.55

**śreyas tu guruvad-vṛttir nityam eva samācaret
guru-putreṣu dāreṣu guroś caiva sva-bandhuṣu**

To the spiritual master's children, wife, and relatives the disciple should offer the same kind of respectful treatment he offers to the spiritual master himself.

Qualifications of a Bona Fide Disciple from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa,
First Vilāsa, Text 84, From Pañcarātra-Pradīpa

Family members of the spiritual master consider him an ordinary human being..

If someone considers the Supreme Personality—Kṛṣṇa or Lord Rāmacandra—to be an ordinary human being, this does not mean that the Lord becomes an ordinary human being. Similarly, if the family members of the spiritual master, who is the bona fide representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, consider the spiritual master an ordinary human being, this does not mean that he becomes an ordinary human being. The spiritual master is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore one who is very serious about spiritual advancement must regard the spiritual master in this way. Even a slight deviation from this understanding can create disaster in the disciple's Vedic studies and austerities.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.27

Respect one's spiritual master's Godbrothers

Śrī Advaita Prabhu and Īśvara Purī, Lord Caitanya's spiritual master, were both disciples of Mādhavendra Purī, who was also the spiritual master of Nityānanda Prabhu. Thus Advaita Prabhu, as Lord Caitanya's spiritual uncle, was always to be respected because one should respect one's spiritual master's Godbrothers as one respects one's spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 5.147

It is the characteristic of a devotee to observe and protect the Vaiṣṇava etiquette

My dear Sanātana, although you are the deliverer of the entire universe and although even the demigods and great saints are purified by touching you, it is the characteristic of a devotee to observe and protect the Vaiṣṇava etiquette. Maintenance of the Vaiṣṇava etiquette is the ornament of a devotee. If one transgresses the laws of etiquette, people make fun of him, and thus he is vanquished in both this world and the next. By observing the etiquette, you have satisfied My mind.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā Ch 4, 129-133,
Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to Sanātana Gosvāmī

INQUIRING FROM GURU

This should not be done in a challenging spirit.

Those who listen to the Bhāgavatam may put questions to the speaker in order to elicit the clear meaning, but this should not be done in a challenging spirit. One must submit questions with a great regard for the speaker and the subject matter. This is also the way recommended in Bhagavad-gītā. One must learn the transcendental subject by submissive aural reception from the right sources. Therefore these sages addressed the speaker Sūta Gosvāmī with great respect.

SB 1.1.5

Inquiries one makes should strictly pertain to transcendental science

One must be jijñāsu, very much inquisitive to learn from the bona fide spiritual master. The inquiries one makes should strictly pertain to transcendental science (jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam). The word uttamam refers to that which is above material knowledge. Tama means "the darkness of this material world," and ut means "transcendental." Generally people are very interested in inquiring about mundane subject matters, but when one has lost such interest and is simply interested in transcendental subject matters, he is quite fit for being initiated.

Upadeśāmṛta: Verse 5

IMPORTANCE OF GURU-VĀṆĪ-SEVĀ

Vāṇī continues to exist eternally.

Although according to material vision His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda 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 vāṇī, his words. There are two ways of association—by vāṇī and by vapuḥ. Vāṇī means words, and vapuḥ means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but vāṇī continues to exist eternally. Therefore we must take advantage of the vāṇī, not the physical presence. The Bhagavad-gītā, for example, is the vāṇī of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although Kṛṣṇa was personally present five thousand years ago and is no longer physically present from the materialistic point of view, the Bhagavad-gītā continues.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya Lila—Concluding Words

Vani is more important than vapu

To carry out the teachings of guru is more important than to worship the form, but none of them should be neglected. Form is called vapu and teachings is called vani. Both should be worshiped. Vani is more important than vapu.

Letter to: Tusta Kṛṣṇa, Ahmedabad 14 December, 1972

The bug who is sitting on the lap of the king

So far personal association with the Guru is concerned, I was only with my Guru Maharaja four or five times, but I have never left his association, not even for a moment. Because I am following his instructions, I have never felt any separation. There are some of my Godbrothers here in India who had constant personal association with Guru Maharaja, but who are neglecting his orders. This is just like the bug who is sitting on the lap of the king. He may be very puffed-up by his position, but all he can succeed in doing is biting the king. Personal association is not so important as association through service.

Letter to: Satadhanya Calcutta 20 February, 1972

If you kindly try to fulfill my mission... that will be our constant association.

So far I am concerned, I do not factually feel any separation from my Spiritual Master because I am trying to serve Him according to His desire. That should be the motto. If you kindly try to fulfill my mission for which you have been sent there, that will be our constant association.

Letter to: Hamsaduta — Los Angeles 22 June, 1970

The feelings of separation will transform into transcendental bliss.

Please be happy in separation. I am separated from my Guru Maharaja since 1936 but I am always with him so long I work according to his direction. So we should all work together for satisfying Lord Krishna and in that way the feelings of separation will transform into transcendental bliss.

Letter to: Uddhava — Boston 3 May, 1968

Lesson 11 Guru-tyāga (Rejection of the Spiritual Master)

Lesson Topics:

Principles of Guru-tyāga
Procedures of Lodging Concerns Regarding Guru
Re-initiation
Continuing to Practice Devotion Service, in ISKCON

Principles and Procedures of Guru-tyāga

A teacher who engages in an abominable action is fit to be abandoned

According to scriptural codes, a teacher who engages in an abominable action and has lost his sense of discrimination is fit to be abandoned.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.5

Spiritual master is liable to be rejected if he proves himself unworthy

According to revealed scriptures, a teacher or spiritual master is liable to be rejected if he proves himself unworthy of the position of a guru or spiritual master..

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.43

**guror apy avaliptasya karyakaryam ajanatah
upatha-pratipannasya parityago vidhiyate**

If the guru becomes attached to sense gratification, loses his sense of duty, and follows a degraded path, a path other than devotional service to the Lord, he should be rejected.

Mahabharata, Udyoga Parva 179.25

By mistake you have come to a rascal ... you can reject him

Even though somebody by mistake has gone to a rascal, the book is there. As soon as you find out, "Here is a rascal who does not know anything about Kṛṣṇa, and I have come to him," reject him. That is stated in the śāstra. Gurur apy avaliptasya kāryākāryam ajānantaḥ parityāgo vidhiyate.(?) Even by mistake you have come to a rascal who does not know how to become guru, you can reject him. Why should you stick to him? Reject him.

Room Conversation -- January 31, 1977, Bhuvaneśvara

How does ISKCON protect disciples, in the case of a guru who proves himself unworthy of the position? Write your comments below.

Procedures for Lodging Concerns Regarding Guru

A disciple may express concerns in relation to their guru in consultation with:

- Temple and GBC authorities
- Śikṣā-gurus
- ISKCON Resolve

If you give up the company of spiritual master, that is not good for you..

But when one leaves a spiritual master, the spiritual master, there may be some reason. That reason is also given in the śāstra, gurur api avaliptasya kāryākāryam ajānataḥ(?). Kārya akārya. If the spiritual master does not know what is actually to be done, what is actually not to be done, and he acts against the rules and regulations of the śāstra, then such spiritual master may be given up. But so long you do not find the spiritual master is doing against the principles of śāstra or guru, then if you give up the company of spiritual master, that is not good for you. That is your downfall.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.16.36 -- Tokyo, January 30, 1974

As long as your mantra guru is present, you cannot go elsewhere..

One day, Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita revealed to the Lord, his reason for wanting re-initiation. He said, "I have revealed my iṣṭa-mantra (the mantra of one's worshipable Deity) that I received from my guru to an undeserving person and since then my mind is disturbed. My Lord, You kindly reinitiate me with the same iṣṭa-mantra, then my mind will become jubilant again."

The Lord replied, "Be very careful, that you do not commit any offences to your guru, the one who instructed you on the iṣṭa-mantra. As long as your mantra guru is present, you cannot go elsewhere, or even come to me. This would jeopardize the spiritual life of both you and Me."

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata Antya-khaṇḍa Chapte10: Śrī Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi Pastimes

**bodhaḥ kaluṣitas tena daurātmyaṁ prakāṭi-kṛtam
gurur yena parityaktas tena tyaktaḥ purā hariḥ**

"One pollutes his own intelligence and exhibits severe weakness of character when he rejects his own spiritual master. Indeed, such a person has already rejected the Supreme Lord, Hari."

Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa

Reinitiation

A devotee who, considering GBC guidelines on the subject of rejecting a guru and consulting with senior ISKCON devotees, has decided to reject his non-bona fide guru, may seek initiation from an approved ISKCON guru. Normal procedures as applicable in the case of first and second initiations as described elsewhere in ISKCON law should be followed.

ISKCON Law 7.2.6

List ways a disciple can continue to be connected to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the guru-paramparā and ISKCON, in the case of Guru-tyāga, before being reinitiated.



Please always try to remember me by my teachings and we shall always be together

Please always try to remember me by my teachings and we shall always be together. Just like I have written in the first publications of Śrīmad-Bhagavatam, "The spiritual Master lives forever by His divine instruction and the disciple lives with him.", because I have always served my Guru Maharaja and followed His teachings I am now even never separated from Him.

Letter to: Cidananda — Bhaktivedanta Manor 25 November, 1973

Unit Four:

Co-operatively Fulfilling the Relationship & Consolidation

LESSON 12 **PRESENTING ONE’S GURU**
Presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda
Presenting Present ISKCON Gurus

LESSON 13 **RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN ISKCON**
Discrimination on the Basis of Guru
Developing Cooperative Relationships

LESSON 14 **COURSE ROUND UP**

Lesson 12 Presenting One's Guru

Lesson Topics

Presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda
Presenting Current ISKCON Gurus

Presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda

List, in the box below, some benefits of publicly promoting Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-ācārya, and preeminent śikṣā-guru in ISKCON, for our present and future.

Presenting Current ISKCON Gurus

List, in the box below, some inappropriate ways of presenting ISKCON present gurus

What might be possible consequences for ISKCON of inappropriately presenting ISKCON gurus? Write your comments in the box below...

Instruct new members to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda

ISKCON Law 7.2.1 First (Harinama) Initiation
(See Page 30)

Use of Title

All ISKCON publications such as books, magazines, newsletters, leaflets, fliers, invitations, etc., should clearly display the full name and titles of Śrīla Prabhupāda including Founder-Ācārya, Prabhupāda, and His Divine Grace, for example: "His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness".(96)

ISKCON Law 2.3.1

Plaques

All ISKCON temples and prominent buildings which do not already have Śrīla Prabhupāda's name inscribed upon them, shall install plaques Śrīla Prabhupāda's full name and his position as the Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

This shall also apply to prominent buildings of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Bhaktivedanta Institute and any other society founded by Śrīla Prabhupāda or affiliated to ISKCON.

ISKCON Law 2.3.3

One should hide one's guru..

**gopayed devatam istam gopayed gurum atmanah
gopayec ca nijam mantram gopayen nija-malikam**

One should hide one's ista-deva, one should hide one's guru, one should hide one's mantra, and one should hide one's japa-mala.

Hari-bhakti-vilasa, verse 2.147

Public display of guru t-shirts, posters, bead-bag buttons, etc.

Disciples of ISKCON dīkṣā and śīkṣā gurus should not wear or publicly display guru t-shirts, posters, bead-bag buttons, athletic caps, etc. (other than Śrīla Prabhupāda).

ISKCON Law/Recommendation 6.4.8 Worship and Etiquette

Photographs of ISKCON dīkṣā or śīkṣā gurus

ISKCON temple residents may keep photographs of ISKCON dīkṣā or śīkṣā gurus privately in their ashram quarters but are not to display them publicly on ISKCON premises. Promoting occasional special preaching events may be an exception.

ISKCON Law 6.4.8 Worship and Etiquette

Web sites prominently feature a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda

That ISKCON center officials shall be responsible to ensure that any and all web sites published by the center prominently feature a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda on the introductory page. This picture should be larger than any other individual's photo (such as the GBC, center President, or guru). Śrīla Prabhupāda should be addressed by his formal name and title: "His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

304. GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda (March 2013)

Lesson 13 Relationships within ISKCON

Lesson Topics

Discrimination on the Basis of Guru
Developing Cooperative Relationships

Discrimination on the Basis of Guru

DISCRIMINATION

“The perceiving, noting, or making a distinction or difference between things.”
Oxford English Dictionary 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press

“Discrimination is the prejudicial treatment of an individual based solely on their membership in a certain group or category...It involves excluding or restricting members of one group from opportunities that are available to other groups.”
Introduction to sociology. 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc, 2009. page 324.

Describe a time when, in ISKCON, you experienced inappropriate discrimination on the basis of your dīkṣā or śikṣā gurus.

List some of the possible long term consequences, for ISKCON, arising from inappropriate favoritism or bias on the basis of guru.

Developing Cooperative Relationships

Describe your vision of what ISKCON would be like, if devotees maintained positive & cooperative relationships between all ISKCON gurus and disciples...

I am so pleased with your mutual friendship that I wish you all good fortune

The Lord said: My dear sons of the King, I am very much pleased by the friendly relationships among you. All of you are engaged in one occupation—devotional service. I am so pleased with your mutual friendship that I wish you all good fortune. Now you may ask a benediction of Me.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.30.8, The Lord speaking to the sons of King Prācīnabarhiṣat

Cooperate to keep this institution together after I am gone

"Your love for me," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "will be shown by how much you cooperate to keep this institution together after I am gone."

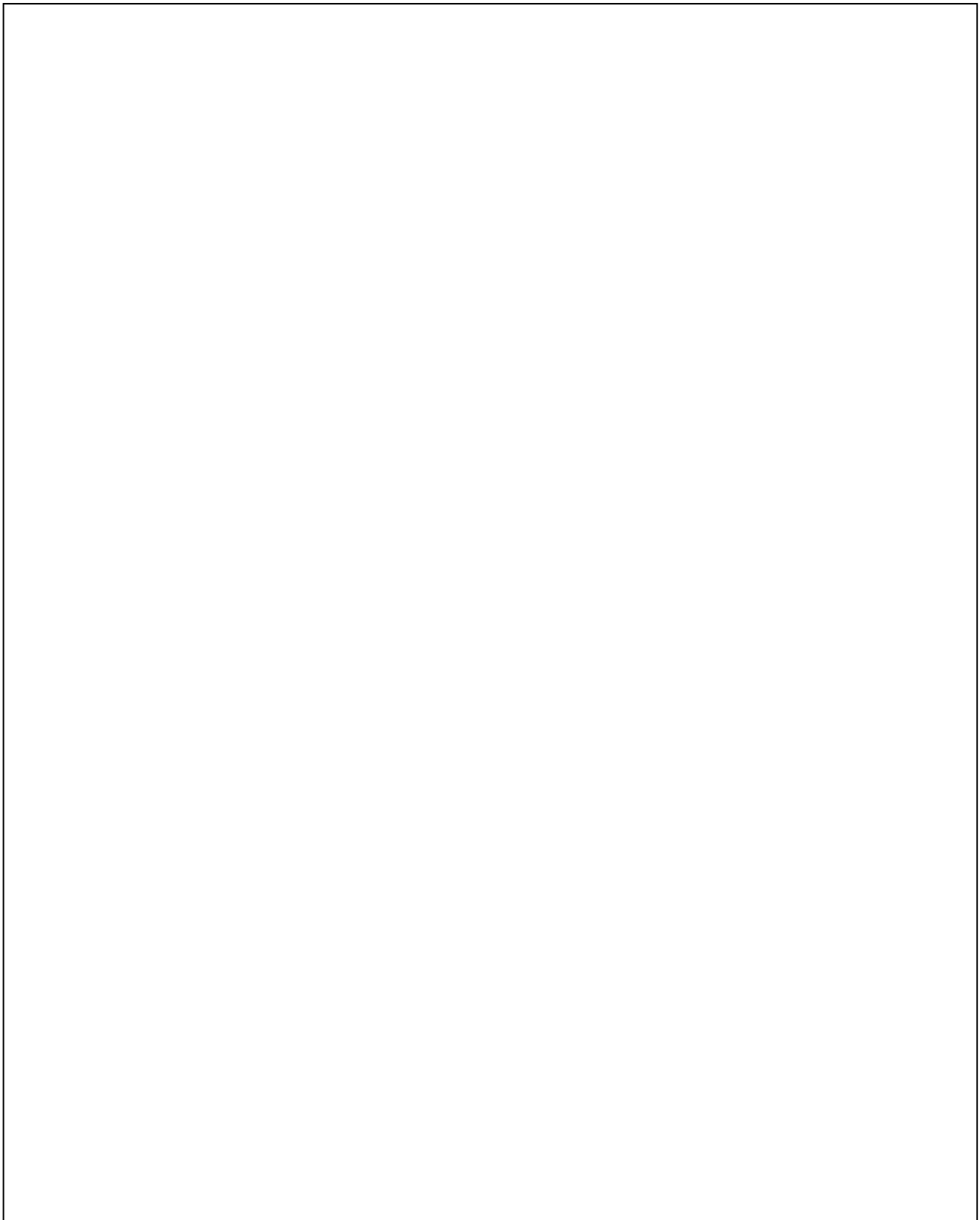
Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta Volume 6, 52: "I Have Done My Part"

"United we stand; divided we fall."

Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself wanted our cooperation. He is God, Kṛṣṇa. And therefore cooperation is very important thing. Nobody should think that "I have got so great ability. I can do." No. It is simply by cooperation we can do very big thing. "United we stand; divided we fall." This is our.... So be strong in pushing on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and Kṛṣṇa will help. He is the strongest. Still, we must be combined together.

Room Conversation With
Rādhā-Dāmodara Saṅkīrtana Party
March 16, 1976, Mayapur

What have you learnt from this course?



Appendixes

1. Additional Quotes
2. GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda (March 2013)
3. Mandatory Qualifications of Dīkṣā-guru in ISKCON
4. Qualifications for Initiation in ISKCON
5. Standards of Conduct for Gurus
6. Rejection of a Fallen “Guru”
7. Harmonizing Lines of Authority Paper
8. G.B.C Resolution on ISKCON Disciple Course
9. Norms for Classroom Behavior
10. Further Reading

Appendix 1 Additional Quotes

Lesson 1 Welcome & Introduction

“We have only to execute the order of the spiritual master ...”

We have only to execute the order of the spiritual master, preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness and follow in the path of the Vaiṣṇavas. The spiritual master represents both Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas; therefore by following the instructions of the spiritual master and by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, everything will be all right.

Purport Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.23.7

“There must be this training college ..”

As soon as one comes to me for becoming disciple, I place before him that "You have to give up all these habits." When he agrees, then I accept him. And therefore I have got some selected, trained-up men. So there must be this training college, institution, and proper training according to the śāstra. Then there is possibility of changing the whole situation.

Conversation with Governor -- April 20, 1975, Vṛndāvana

Lesson 5 Guru-pādāśraya

**yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ**

"Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed."

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23

Offering should be made to the spiritual master with heart and soul...

A disciple should serve the spiritual master as a menial servant, and whatever he has in his possession should be dedicated to the spiritual master. *prāṇair arthair dhiyā vācā*. Everyone has his life, his wealth, his intelligence and his words, and all of them should be offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the via medium of the spiritual master. Everything should be offered to the spiritual master as a matter of duty, but the offering should be made to the spiritual master with heart and soul, not artificially to gain material prestige...

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.30-31

Take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and to serve him with heart and soul.

For spiritual achievement the easiest path is to take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and to serve him with heart and soul. That is the secret of success. As stated by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his eight stanzas of prayer to the spiritual master, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. By serving or receiving the grace of the spiritual master, one receives the grace of the Supreme Lord. By serving her devotee-husband, Kardama Muni, Devahūti shared in his achievements. Similarly, a sincere disciple, simply by serving a bona fide spiritual master, can achieve all the mercy of the Lord and the spiritual master simultaneously.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.23.7

Lesson 7 Initiation Vows

Affection for the spiritual master and following the instructions of the Spiritual Master

You should understand that when you sat at the fire sacrifice upon your initiation, you made a vow to the Spiritual Master at that time. So, you should not break these vows. You say that you appreciate the association of devotees but how will you withstand the material attraction? If you are not chanting Hare Krishna offenselessly and regularly? Affection for the spiritual master and following the instructions of the Spiritual Master is the same. My instruction is that all of my disciples must attend the mangala arati and chant 16 rounds daily.

This life is very flickering. At any moment you may die so we must cling very close to the instruction of higher authorities, the spiritual master and Lord Krishna in Bhagavad-gita.

Letter to: Radha-Kanta — Vrindaban 20 August, 1974

This is tug of war

This is tug of war. So don't be afraid of māyā. Simply enhance chanting and you'll be conqueror. That's all. Nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve na kutaścana bibhyati [SB 6.17.28]. We are not afraid of māyā because Kṛṣṇa is there. Yes. Kṛṣṇa says, kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇśyati [Bg. 9.31]. You just declare, "My devotee will never be vanquished by māyā." Māyā cannot do anything. Simply you have to become strong. And what is that strength? Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, loudly. Yes.

Bhagavad-gītā 3.6-10 -- Los Angeles, December 23, 1968

Lesson 12 Presenting One's Guru

We are not instructing our disciples to chant my name

Just like, we are not instructing our disciples to chant my name "Bhaktivedanta Swami, Bhaktivedanta Swami." No. They're chanting Hare Krishna. hari-tvena samasta-sastrair uktah - "Guru is respected as good as Krishna." But that does not mean I shall teach them to go and chant my name, "Bhaktivedanta Swami, Bhaktivedanta Swami, Bhaktivedanta Swami." What is this? We are teaching, "Chant Hare Krishna." Harer nama, harer nama...

Śrīla Prabhupāda morning walk, 29 March 1974, Bombay.

Repeatedly advertise that one is a devotee of Mahaprabhu

It is not enough to repeatedly advertise that one is a devotee of Mahaprabhu by saying, "I am Gaura's! I am Gaura's!" Rather, those who follow the practices taught by Mahaprabhu are understood to get the results of being the Lord's follower.

Śrīla Jagadananda Pandit, Prema-vivarta 8.6

Lesson 14 Course Round Up

If transaction is perfect from both sides... then Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very, very easy.

One must be serious to understand, and he must approach a qualified mahātmā guru. Then his business will be, transaction will be very nicely done. This is Vedic process. ... if the transaction is perfect from both sides, from the disciple's side and guru's side, then Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very, very easy.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.29, Vṛndāvana, August 10, 1974

Appendix 2

GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda

303. GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda (March 2013)

Whereas there is a need to clarify within our society, via a succinct statement, Śrīla Prabhupāda's preeminent position in relationship to dīkṣā and śikṣa gurus as well as all ISKCON members, and to provide clarity on the function and position of dīkṣā and śikṣa gurus in the ISKCON society:

RESOLVED:

That the GBC endorses the following statement:

As the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and the preeminent teacher and ultimate authority within our society, Śrīla Prabhupāda has a unique relationship with every ISKCON devotee. Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the original guru whose Divine Grace descends through the medium of the guru parampara. As such, a devotee is ultimately delivered by Sri Krishna acting through a combination of various manifestations of His mercy. These include, but are not limited to, the caitya guru, Śrīla Prabhupāda, the guru parampara, one's dīkṣā guru, other śikṣa gurus, the Holy Name, sastra, and the nine processes of devotional service.

Within these cooperative elements, Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, is the preeminent śikṣā-guru for all members of ISKCON. All members of ISKCON, for all generations, are encouraged to seek shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda. All members of ISKCON are entitled and encouraged to have a personal relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda through his books, teachings, service, and his ISKCON society.

All members accepting leadership roles within ISKCON, including dīkṣā gurus and śikṣa gurus, have the duty of serving together under ISKCON's Governing Body Commission (GBC) to fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions as he has given in his books, lectures, and personal communications. Overall, the primary duty of all dīkṣā gurus, śikṣa gurus, and others in leadership positions, is to assist Śrīla Prabhupāda in his service to his Guru Maharaja Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur, and our Brahma Madhva Gaudiya Sampradaya. Those who accept the service of dīkṣā guru or śikṣa guru in ISKCON are required to be exemplary in representing Śrīla Prabhupāda's teaching in their words and personal behavior. The śikṣa guru gives spiritual instruction and inspiration on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda and our guru parampara. The dīkṣā guru gives spiritual instruction, inspiration, formal initiation, a spiritual name, and later imparts the sacred Gayatri mantras to a qualified disciple as a service to Śrīla Prabhupāda and our guru parampara.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has clearly explained that devotees who are strictly following the Kṛṣṇa conscious principles are acting on the liberated platform, and, as such, are pure devotees, even though they may actually not yet be liberated. (Such unalloyed devotional service is not necessarily determined by one's role or position of service, but by one's realization.)

Those who accept the service of dīkṣā or śikṣa guru within ISKCON are mandated to be strict followers of the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and, as long as they follow, they are acting on the liberated platform. Thus they may serve, as Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered, as bona fide representatives of the Lord and the guru parampara and be a via media of their mercy. Yet it should be clearly understood that if such dīkṣā or śikṣa gurus deviate from strictly following, they may fall down from their position. Thus, to act as a dīkṣā guru in ISKCON means to serve under the GBC and in cooperation with other ISKCON authorities by functioning as a “regular gurus” as Śrīla Prabhupāda has directed.

This statement, while conclusive, is not exhaustive in its discussion of these principles. The GBC may authorize additional statements and papers in the future to further explain the preeminent position of our Founder-Acarya Śrīla Prabhupāda, the role and responsibilities of those who serve as gurus in our society, and the related duties of ISKCON members and initiates.

RESOLVED:

All GBC members must distribute this resolution to all ISKCON temples, communities and congregations via appropriate means of communication for the education of all ISKCON members. This statement shall also be studied in ISKCON courses including introductory courses, the ISKCON Disciple Course, the Spiritual Leadership Seminar: Being a Guru in ISKCON, and other relevant venues. Reading this statement, and affirming it has been read prior to initiation, shall be part of the test for all prospective initiates.

More details on these spiritual relationships and duties may be found in the official “Harmonizing ISKCON’s Lines of Authority” Paper approved by the GBC in 2012.

304. Founder-Acarya Foremost on ISKCON Temple Websites (March 2013)

Whereas numerous websites of ISKCON temples currently do not prominently feature the personality and teachings of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda as the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness on their home page. Many do not have a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda at all. Few of them have links to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, tapes, & videos. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s pre-eminent position as the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON appears to have been de-emphasized on numerous ISKCON temple websites. On certain sites, “ISKCON” or “Prabhupāda” only appear in the introductory pages in a very small, faint font; Whereas currently, there is no requirement that determines how Śrīla Prabhupāda’s photo and official title should be displayed on ISKCON center web sites:

RESOLVED:

That ISKCON center officials shall be responsible to ensure that any and all web sites published by the center prominently feature a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda on the introductory page. This picture should be larger than any other individual’s photo (such as the GBC, center President, or guru). Śrīla Prabhupāda should be addressed by his formal name and title: “His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or “ISKCON Founder-Acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda”, or an equivalent translation.

All such web sites shall prominently display direct links that emphasize Śrīla Prabhupāda on their home page such that the casual viewer would have access on the home page to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings and video recordings. The picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda on the home page, accompanied by his formal name and title, should be free from any other person’s image. In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s image should be the only personality in the photo or likeness. The fonts presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s name and title should be easily legible. All ISKCON center web sites should adhere to this standard no later than three months (90 days) from passage of this resolution.

305. “Harmonizing ISKCON’s Lines of Authority” Paper Required

Reading [ISKCON Law]

Whereas harmony between various authorities in ISKCON is required;
Whereas while initiating gurus are important spiritual authorities in the lives of devotees, other ISKCON authorities also play an important role;
Whereas the GBC paper entitled “Harmonizing ISKCON’s Lines of Authorities” explains how to promote harmony in the services of gurus and other ISKCON authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the official GBC paper entitled “Harmonizing ISKCON’s Lines of Authority” shall be required reading for all prospective hāriṇama initiates before the initiation. This should be verified both by the ISKCON authority who gives the recommendation for hāriṇama initiation as well as by the initiating guru. Within three months, all GBC Zonal Secretaries shall:

- have the paper translated such that it is accessible to the devotees of their zone
- have the paper distributed to all approved initiating gurus, to all National Councils and other regional bodies, and to temple presidents, congregational leaders, and other officials in their zone

306. Amendment to Required Examination Prior to Accepting a Dīkṣā-guru [ISKCON Law]

Whereas the GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the paper “Harmonizing ISKCON’s Lines of Authority” have been approved by the GBC and been made required reading for all hāriṇama initiation candidates; Whereas it is also important to make sure that the candidates have understood these papers; Whereas according to ISKCON law 7.2.1.1.6, every hāriṇama initiation candidate must take a test before initiation. This test is a good opportunity to make sure that the candidates have read these papers and to judge their level of understanding of their important concepts:

RESOLVED:

(a) that ISKCON Law 7.2.1.1.6 be amended to include the following three questions in the test that all hāriṇama initiation candidates must take before initiation:

14. Have you read the GBC Statement on the Position of Śrīla Prabhupāda?

15. Have you read the paper “Harmonizing ISKCON’s Lines of Authority”

16. What have you understood as the most important points of “Harmonizing ISKCON’s Lines of Authority” paper?

And (b), that the Guru Services Committee shall update the Initiation Exam accordingly for all GBCs and gurus to distribute.

Appendix 3

Mandatory Qualifications of Dīkṣā-guru in ISKCON

ISKCON Law 6.2.1 GBC 2010 Resolutions

- Must have been an initiated disciple for at least ten years.
- Must have been strictly following the four regulative principles, regularly attending the morning program, and chanting sixteen rounds daily, and have otherwise remained in good standing for the previous ten years.
- Must not exhibit tendencies toward behavior contrary to Vaisnava moral principles.
- Must have excelled in preaching activities.
- Must exhibit proficiency in knowledge and understanding of sastra.
- Must preach without concoction and strictly according to the parampara, with sastric knowledge grounded firmly in siddhanta, or conclusive truth.
- Must be effective in practical preaching and counseling.
- Must have no loyalties that compete with or compromise his loyalty to Śrīla Prabhupāda, to his teachings, and to ISKCON.
- Must show understanding of and dedication to Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission with a strong commitment to maintaining and increasing book distribution and other ISKCON projects.
- Must recognize the GBC as the ultimate managing authority in ISKCON, support the GBC system, and follow the GBC.
- Should be engaged full-time in devotional service in an ISKCON center or other ISKCON-approved preaching program.
- Within the previous ten years at a minimum, must not have engaged in serious criminal activities or been responsible for:
 - A financial impropriety that put significant funds or other assets at risk
 - Risking legal consequences through the improper handling of funds and assets under his/her control
 - Causing a loss of significant funds through unauthorized actions
 - Any other act of moral turpitude, as defined in the ecclesiastical discretion of the GBC, and/or the legal jurisdiction in which the candidate resides
- An additional requirement is attendance of the Guru Seminar.

Discretionary Qualifications:

- Spiritual degrees – Bhakti Sastri, Bhakti Vaibhava, and Bhaktivedanta (when available) – shall be a strongly recommended qualification for being granted no objection status to serve as a guru in ISKCON.
- Should be nothing in his character, conduct, or circumstances to give rise to doubt about his ability to follow the code of conduct for gurus.
- Should not be involved in any abnormal personal situation. An example of such a situation would be a disrupted or anomalous family life which could distract a guru from his guru duties or otherwise prove a disturbance to him or his followers.
- 4. Should always be responsible, conscientious, and honorable in ordinary dealings.

Appendix 4

Standards of Conduct for Gurus in ISKCON

ISKCON Law 6.4.3

Must always set the highest example for all devotees.

Must guide his disciples to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions as taught and followed in ISKCON.

Must protect and nourish the faith of all ISKCON devotees in their guru, in Śrīla Prabhupāda, and in Sri Krishna.

Must encourage newcomers' faith in ISKCON and protect the faith of existing members.

Must not give initiation until the approval process has been fully completed.

Must not canvass for disciples.

Must allow all uninitiated devotees full freedom to exercise their right to accept initiation from the guru of their choice.

Must allow uninitiated devotees who have preliminarily taken shelter of him the full freedom to change their minds on their choice of initiating guru.

Since the guru-daksina received by an ISKCON guru is the property of ISKCON, it must be used for the benefit of the Krishna consciousness movement. All guru-daksina must be kept in a special account, preferably an ISKCON account, with at least two signatures, and accurate account records must be kept.

It is prohibited to require a prospective disciple to make a minimum donation or other financial commitment as a prerequisite to be accepted for initiation.

Gurus shall minimize the number of devotees engaged in their personal service and in their traveling entourage. Gurus shall not personally engage single members of the opposite sex, or married members of the opposite sex without their spouse, in direct personal service, and should never be alone or in a solitary place with them as ordained by sastra.

6.4.3.2 Standards in Relation to the GBC Body

Must respect the GBC as Śrīla Prabhupāda's chosen successor as the ultimate managing authority of ISKCON and maintain a respectful serving attitude towards the GBC.

As a guru in parampara from Śrīla Prabhupāda, he must follow Śrīla Prabhupāda in order to work in ISKCON. Therefore, he must accept the GBC Body as his authority and follow the directives of the GBC.

Must submit to any disciplinary sanctions imposed by the GBC Body, including not initiating new disciples.

6.4.3.3 Standards in Relation to GBC Zonal Secretaries

Must act under the supervision of and in coordination with GBC Zonal Secretaries.

Must not change his residence without consulting the local GBC Zonal Secretary beforehand, since such a move may affect the temples and devotees.

Must disclose financial records to the GBC Secretariat on an annual basis.

6.4.3.4 Standards in Relation to ISKCON Spiritual Authorities

Must cooperate with and be accountable to the local ISKCON authorities.

Must not initiate any devotee who has not received proper recommendation from the appropriate ISKCON spiritual authority.

Must instruct disciples and other devotees to cooperate with ISKCON authorities and to follow proper etiquette in case some disagreement arises.

Must maintain amicable working relationships with ISKCON authorities and not undermine them in any way.

Since temple presidents and project leaders are fully responsible for engaging the devotees in their charge, must not discuss changes in service, location or ashrama with a disciple without first consulting the disciple's local authority.

6.4.5 Sanctioning of Gurus by the GBC

The GBC Body may apply any of the following sanctions against a guru for misconduct.

6.4.5.1 Warning (or Censure)

If a guru is found deviating from or neglecting spiritual practices, but the deviation or negligence is not very severe or habitual, or if a guru is transgressing the approved standards and guidelines for guru behavior (such as canvassing for disciples, etc.) the guru should be warned (or censured) confidentially.

6.4.5.2 Probation

If the warnings are not heeded, or if the deviation or neglect of spiritual practices are of a more serious nature, or if the transgressions of guru codes of behavior are serious and habitual, the guru may be put under probation with specific conditions which regulate his guru functions (including temporary withdrawal of authorization to initiate new disciples). In addition he may be given general recommendations or specific activities to perform as part of a program for his rectification and eventual reinstatement.

6.4.5.3 Suspension

If a guru blatantly ignores the terms of probation, or repeatedly breaks one or more of the regulative principles, or acts in a manner which seriously and harmfully disregards existing ISKCON or GBC policies, or leaves his ashrama of sannyasa without authorization, or leaves the association of devotees and the ISKCON movement, or completely deviates from standard sadhana, he may be suspended. If a guru is suspended he cannot give initiation, nor maintain an absolute shiksa position in relation with his disciples, nor be introduced as a spiritual master, nor perform his guru functions such as receiving guru-puja or the acceptance of daksina.

6.4.5.4 Removal

If a guru becomes openly inimical to Śrīla Prabhupāda or ISKCON; or otherwise acts demonically; or becomes an impersonalist (mayavadi); or preaches the unauthorized philosophy of apasampradaya groups against Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's principles; or blatantly and consistently defies ISKCON and GBC policies; or if a guru's attachment to sense gratification is serious, prolonged, or hopeless, then, as per shastric injunction, he shall be removed from his position as dīkṣā or shikṣa-guru.

Appendix 5

Qualifications for Initiation in ISKCON (Relevant Excerpts)

7.2 RESPONSIBILITY OF CANDIDATE FOR INITIATION

It is the personal responsibility of candidates for initiation to correctly choose, by the exercise of their own intelligence, a particular devotee as spiritual master. Candidates for initiation should accept initiation from a spiritual master only after developing firm and mature faith in that devotee and in his ability to take them back to Godhead. Sadhu, shastra, and guru are the authoritative references to apply in ascertaining the level of advancement of a devotee. Receiving official ISKCON guru approval signifies that the devotee has successfully completed the authorization process set forth in ISKCON law, and that in the judgment of certain senior devotees the candidate measures up to the standards and guidelines given in ISKCON law. However, such approval is not automatically to be taken as a statement about the degree of God-realization of the approved guru, and it is not intended to replace the intelligent discrimination of the candidate.

7.2.1 FIRST (HARINAMA) INITIATION 1 QUALIFICATIONS FOR FIRST INITIATION

1.1 One Year Preparatory Period

In order to receive first initiation one must have been engaged favorably in devotional service, strictly following the four regulative principles and chanting sixteen rounds a day, for at least one year without interruption.

ISKCON devotees shall instruct new members to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and to receive guidance, training and assistance from those who are practically and directly instructing them in Krishna consciousness. ISKCON members shall choose when and from whom they wish to request initiation. They must focus their attention on Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-Acarya and as their preeminent śikṣā guru.

After having established a solid relationship with His Divine Grace's vani, and after a minimum of six months of strict sadhana, they may accept an authorized ISKCON devotee as a prospective dīkṣā guru, and after a subsequent minimum of six months, accept vaisnava dīkṣā from him or her. It should be understood that the purpose of śikṣā and dīkṣā within ISKCON is to strengthen the devotee's relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda in terms of fidelity, attachment, and affection.

Upon deciding from whom to take initiation, after receiving permission from that guru, and after notifying the local Temple President or relevant authority, the candidate should begin to worship that guru as his spiritual master, chanting his pranama-mantra. After chanting the pranama mantra of their dīkṣā guru, all grand-disciples and future generations should chant at least the first of Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranama mantras while offering obeisances as a means of respecting the Founder-Acarya. Actual initiation may take place only after a minimum six-month period from the date shelter was accepted by the prospective guru and the local Temple President or relevant authority was notified.

1.4 Devotees Residing Within Temple Communities

In addition to satisfying the above requirements, devotees residing in temple communities must, during the one-year preparatory period, regularly attend the full morning program. 1.5 Devotees Residing Outside of Temple Communities Devotees who do not live in a temple community and who cannot come daily to the temple programs may be initiated provided they have regular morning programs at home or attend regular morning programs at the nama-hatta center.

1.6 Pass Examination

Before a devotee can be permitted to formally take shelter of a particular ISKCON spiritual master and be subsequently recommended for initiation, he or she must demonstrate a basic understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings by answering an oral or written test administered by the Temple President or other recommending authority.

In the event that a candidate for initiation who has formally accepted shelter from a spiritual master subsequently decides to aspire for another ISKCON guru, this must be communicated to both gurus as well as the local authorities. The continuous six month period required before initiation would begin from the time of formal acceptance by the new guru.

Before a candidate can receive first initiation, the prospective guru must receive a formal written recommendation from the appropriate ISKCON spiritual authority, as determined by the candidate's situation.

One-year Wait Between First and Second Initiation

To be qualified to receive second initiation, a first-initiated devotee must have been steadily engaged in favorable devotional service, chanting sixteen rounds a day without fail, and strictly following the four regulative principles for a period of at least one year from the time of receiving first initiation. In addition, the candidate must have regularly attended a morning program, whether in a temple, preaching center, nama-hatta center, or at home.

Two-year Wait for Those Who Fall Severely

A devotee who, after receiving first initiation, falls severely from the spiritual standard by neglecting or forsaking his initiation vows in a serious way or by rejecting the association of ISKCON devotees for a prolonged time, shall, after he returns to normal practice, be required to wait for at least two years before being given second initiation.

Examination Option of Initiating Guru

It is the responsibility of the initiating guru to determine the fitness of his disciple for brahminical initiation. To help do this, he may require his disciple to pass a suitable examination.

4.2.6 Formal Recommendation for Second Initiation

1. The guru of a candidate for second initiation must receive a written recommendation from the appropriate ISKCON authority. The appropriate authority is determined in the same manner as described above for first initiation.

7.2.4 Initiation Only from Approved Gurus

ISKCON members who in violation of ISKCON law take initiation from gurus who have not been approved to initiate in ISKCON shall not be permitted to serve within ISKCON. If the non-approved guru has an institution or ashrama outside ISKCON, then, according to standard etiquette, his disciples should serve within the institution of their guru and should not serve

within ISKCON. (This rule does not apply to persons who were already initiated before they became ISKCON members.)

However, the GBC Body also acknowledges that there may be exceptions to this general rule. Ultimately, local ISKCON authorities have the right to determine whether or not a person may live or serve in the centers under their jurisdiction. In respect to the above concerns, at their discretion they may also choose to restrict a certain individual's contact with ISKCON.

Prior Initiation by Non-Bona Fide Gurus

Persons who have taken initiation from non-bona fide gurus before becoming members of ISKCON should follow the injunction of Śrīla Jiva Gosvami that such a useless guru, a family priest acting as guru, should be given up, and that the proper, bona fide guru should be accepted.

7.3 Guidelines 7.3.1 Unauthorized "Initiation" Ceremonies

In cases where the formal guru-disciple relationship has not been properly sanctioned by procedures given in ISKCON Law, no ISKCON member shall engage in giving any of the elements of the initiation ceremony—such as giving a devotional name, giving sanctified chanting beads, or neck beads, or participating in some ceremony or ritual of commitment — in any number or combination -- to other devotees in ISKCON or its congregations, with the stated or unstated purpose or effect of creating the resemblance of a formal guru-disciple relationship.

When such unauthorized activities have already taken place:

- a. All participants should be informed that no initiation has taken place, nor has any binding pledge leading towards initiation been made.
 - b. The junior devotee in the transaction should seek to establish a relationship with an authorized initiating guru in whom he can place full faith.
- All devotees must cease using any names given, if any.

8.2.1.5 Resident Devotees Normally Initiated in ISKCON

Devotees who live and work within ISKCON must be initiated in ISKCON except if someone was previously initiated by a recognized sampradaya who afterwards wants to join and serve in ISKCON under the approval and direction of the local GBC.

15.4.1 Initiation of Congregational Devotees

Congregational members shall be subject to the same standards for initiation as stated in ISKCON Law on initiation and for acceptance of Guru. ISKCON Law states that the local Temple or Regional Authorities must recommend the congregational candidate. However this shall be done in the same manner as any other qualified devotee. If a local authority considers a candidate for initiation not qualified, then the candidate should be informed what needs to be done in order to become qualified according to ISKCON Law. It shall be prohibited to require a minimum donation or financial commitment or other requirements not mentioned by Śrīla Prabhupāda or ISKCON Law. As already mentioned in ISKCON Law, an individual guru is under no obligation to initiate a devotee because a proper recommendation has been given.

Appendix 6

Rejection of a Fallen “Guru” (ISKCON Laws)

N.B.: The following laws are based on Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta, by Śrī Narahari Sarakāra Ṭhākura (an associate of Śrī Caitanya), Bhakti-sandarbhā by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, and Jaiva-dharma by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, in addition to the writings of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

6.5.1.1 When a Fallen Guru May Be Rejected

If it is ascertained either by the admission of the guru, or by the testimony of irrefutably reliable witness(es) that the guru was fallen at the time of initiation, then the disciple has a legitimate reason to reject him and take re-initiation from a bona fide spiritual master.

6.5.1.2 When a Fallen Guru Must Be Rejected

6.5.1.2.1 Hopelessly Entangled in Sense Gratification

If a guru has become hopelessly entangled in sense gratification, and it has been established by reliable testimony or by his own admissions that he has been regularly violating the regulative principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and if there is virtually no hope for his rectification, then the disciple should reject him and may accept re-initiation.

6.5.1.2.2 Takes on Demoniatic Qualities

If the spiritual master takes on demoniac qualities and becomes inimical to ISKCON, he should be rejected and the disciple may take re-initiation.

6.5.1.3 When Not to Reject a Fallen Guru

If a guru is engaged in sense gratification, violating one or more of the regulative principles, but there is hope that he can be rectified, then his disciples should not reject him but should allow time for such rectification to take place, and they should take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and senior Vaisnavas as śikṣa-gurus.

6.5.1.4 When a Suspended Guru May Be Rejected

A disciple of a suspended guru who has severely lost his faith in his spiritual master, or who has developed an offensive mentality towards him, and who is unable to regain his faith, even after hearing many instructions in the matter, may take permission from the spiritual master for release to accept a different initiating guru. The devotee should act in consultation with his local GBC representative. If the suspended guru withholds his permission, then the disciple may seek permission from the GBC Body.

6.5.1.5 “Guru Āśrayā” for Guidance

Devotees whose initiating spiritual master has fallen down should take guidance from the GBC papers entitled “Guru Āśrayā” and “Questions and Answers About Reinitiation.” These papers also present ISKCON’s guidelines on the importance of taking shelter of a spiritual master and the role of śikṣa-guru.

Appendix 7

Harmonizing ISKCON's Lines of Authority

Official GBC Policy Paper

This essay will focus exclusively on defining principles that should be followed by initiating or instructing spiritual masters, disciples of initiating or instructing spiritual masters, Zonal GBCs, Regional Secretaries, Temple Presidents, and other ISKCON-authorized managers. The aim is to prevent misunderstandings between spiritual masters and managers, as well as to minimize the influence these potential misunderstandings may have upon devotees under their combined care.

"Spiritual Master" Means Dīkṣā, Śīkṣā, or Both

It should be noted that, from here on, unless specified, whenever we refer to "the spiritual master" we mean both initiating spiritual masters and instructing spiritual masters (including managers who act as such). Additionally, whenever we refer to "spiritual authorities" we mean anyone (spiritual master or manager) whose instructions (śīkṣā) and example have formed the foundation of a devotee's faith in devotional service and who continues to build on that foundation of the devotee's faith.

Authority Within ISKCON

This essay is not a detailed or definitive analysis of ISKCON's management system, nor is it a detailed analysis of guru-tattva—the requisite qualities and duties of a spiritual master and the process of choosing a spiritual master.

The basic premise of this essay is as follows: Whether a devotee is an initiating spiritual master, an instructing spiritual master, a sannyasi, a Governing Body Commissioner, a Zonal Secretary, a Regional Secretary, a Temple President, a congregational leader, or anyone else in a position of authority within ISKCON, the authority bestowed upon that devotee is complete only if he or she follows Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction to serve in ISKCON under the authority of the GBC Body.

To establish this premise, we feel we need do no more than emphasize that His Divine Grace consistently and clearly established this principle in his teachings, as well as within official documents he himself signed. Śrīla Prabhupāda thus clearly established the GBC as the ultimate managing authority and also indicated that the GBC's jurisdiction includes the responsibility to offer spiritual guidance (śīkṣā) to the whole of ISKCON, including all devotees serving as spiritual masters:

Reporter: "Is there anyone who is designated to succeed you as the primary teacher of the movement?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "I am training some, I mean to say, advanced students so that they may very easily take up the charge. I have made them GBC."¹

In other words, although the GBC is the ultimate managing authority in ISKCON, the GBC's duty is not only to manage but to teach.

Two Lines of Authority

Since every devotee accepts his or her spiritual inspiration from higher authorities, two lines of authority, with their representatives, exist within ISKCON—one is seen as primarily spiritual, while the other is seen as primarily managerial. Both lines of authority serve their own unique yet interdependent purposes in submission to the orders of our Founder-Acarya. Both are authorized by the GBC to give shelter to devotees under their care. This shelter is given through both instruction and example.

By distinguishing the two lines of spiritual authority in these terms—as primarily spiritual or primarily managerial—we are not suggesting that managerial authority is contrary to spiritual authority. Nor are we suggesting that the spiritual line of authority is somehow more privileged or intrinsically more pure.

"Management is also spiritual activity. . . . It is Krishna's establishment."²

"In our preaching work . . . we deal with so much property and money and so many books bought and sold, but because these dealings all pertain to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, they should never be considered material. That one is absorbed in thoughts of such management does not mean that he is outside of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If one rigidly observes the regulative principle of chanting sixteen rounds of the maha-mantra every day, his dealings with the material world for the sake of spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are not different from the spiritual cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness."³

In a spiritual society a manager cannot fulfill his or her duty to manage simply by declaring and enforcing rules. The rules themselves must have a spiritual foundation, and their implementation and enforcement must be applied in accordance with Vaisnava principles. Managers who serve with this understanding will generally carry the full weight of spiritual authority for those under their charge.

We should therefore see the oneness between "spiritual" and "managerial." But there is also some difference, and understanding this simultaneous oneness and difference requires the use of these two distinct terms with their explanations.

The Spiritual Line of Authority

The spiritual line of authority begins with Lord Krishna and continues to Brahma, Narada, Vyasa, and the entire disciplic succession through Śrīla Prabhupāda, our Founder-Acarya.

¹ Room Conversation with Reporter, Los Angeles, June 4, 1976

² Room Conversation, January 16, 1977, Calcutta

³ Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.16.3, purport

Those who are submissive to our sampradaya and who serve under the authority of the GBC are authorized to give śikṣā and shelter in this spiritual line, under the auspices of ISKCON. This spiritual line can include Governing Body Commissioners, GBC Zonal Secretaries, spiritual masters, sannyasis, Regional Secretaries, Temple Presidents, congregational leaders, and both traveling and community preachers. In fact, anyone who strictly follows a bona fide spiritual master, both by example and precept, can be authorized to represent the spiritual line of authority.

Generally speaking, the most prominent spiritual authority is one's initiating or instructing spiritual master. The scriptures clearly say that devotees should obey and be loyal to their spiritual masters. The spiritual masters thus exert authority over their disciples, and in so doing the spiritual masters are able to train and educate their disciples in the development of bhakti. The spiritual masters, therefore, assume a significant role in giving their disciples the spiritual education and inspiration necessary to advance in Krishna consciousness.

The Managerial Line of Authority

In the managerial line of authority, and in accordance with Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, the supervision of the Society and the enforcement of its rules proceed from the GBC. When we use the word "authority" in the context of the managerial structure, we do not mean an absolute, infallible authority—such as the authority of scripture—but the mandate to organize the preaching movement so that it is aligned with the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. To carry out that mandate, his followers have adapted ISKCON's managerial system, given by Śrīla Prabhupāda, to take into account the proliferation of temples, congregational devotees (who are not temple residents), and projects like farms and gurukulas, as well as other favorable organizations and entities. Thus, to better serve this expanding field and its members, this structure presently includes various regional, national, and continental governing bodies consisting of, but not limited to, Governing Body Commissioners, GBC Zonal Secretaries, spiritual masters, sannyasis, Regional Secretaries, Temple Presidents, congregational leaders, and both traveling and community preachers.

Defining the Point of Divergence

Although in an ideal world everything would work according to Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision for ISKCON, we have seen tendencies from those in one line of authority to interfere with those in the other line of authority.

For instance, there are spiritual authorities who sometimes interfere with competent and responsible managers. They do not consider themselves part of the zonal managerial structure where their preaching has influence (though they are in fact accountable to it), but they are still either directly or indirectly managing some project(s) within that structure.

Therefore at times they manage devotees, money, and even projects that their followers and dependents⁴ are responsible for, without a clear agreement with the managerial structure with

which they intersect. By so doing, they may inadvertently undermine the managerial line of authority by encouraging their dependents to direct their service, and thus their loyalty, to their spiritual authority's own management structure.

This scenario creates not only confusion but a spirit of separatism as well. Situations such as these can also become points of contention for managers, although the more junior managers often refrain from directly voicing their grievances because they feel intimidated out of fear of committing offenses, especially to spiritual masters.

On the other hand, there are also managerial authorities who sometimes provide inadequate spiritual care. This can fuel the spiritual master's inclination to intervene by suggesting an alternative for his disciple's association or service.

For instance, managers may sometimes place greater importance on management goals than on sadhana, preaching purely, or the development of purity in the devotional service of those under their care. Managers may even neglect the spiritual development of those within their jurisdiction who do not offer resources to help their managerial vision, even though said managers may have done little to inspire help from them or to empower other authorities to do the same.

Deference to the Managerial Line of Authority

The above-mentioned scenarios cause tension between the spiritual and the managerial lines of authority.

Of course, it is understood that circumstances do arise where there are financially independent devotees who have no managerial connection with locally organized sanghas. Still, it should not be assumed that no effort is being made by local management structures to include every devotee, or aspiring devotee, within their locally managed system of care for congregational devotees.

Therefore, with respect to the service performed by ISKCON managers, a spiritual master should always seek approval from the managers overseeing the area of jurisdiction in which his disciples are living before suggesting a new sangha or service for them, or intervening in other managerial decisions.

Best, of course, is to train the disciples to offer respect to their local managers right from the start of the spiritual–master/disciple relationship. Many ISKCON managers are carrying out the responsibility of maintaining the temples, Deities, book distribution, and other standards given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Deity installation means regular worship without fail and for good."⁵

⁴"Dependents" are not only those who are spiritually dependent. There are instances where devotees are also financially dependent upon their spiritual authorities and are financially maintained by the structures the spiritual authorities have themselves created.

⁵ Letter to Sivananda, 2 September 1971

Therefore spiritual masters should teach their disciples to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission by cooperating with their local leaders and managers.

But this does not mean that a manager should assume that he or she has complete freedom to ignore legitimate needs of those under his or her care or that he or she has the freedom to ignore concerns expressed by spiritual masters who ask them to see that their disciples are properly cared for. They should be sensitive to the concerns of the spiritual masters as well as their disciples.

If the spiritual master still strongly feels that the level of care for his disciples within the local management structure is inadequate, taking into account the level of commitment and responsibilities being asked of them (his disciples), then he may appeal on their behalf to the higher levels of management, the local GBC, or other ISKCON avenues of appeal, as listed later in this paper.

More on this point will be addressed later. But before we do that, we will first briefly discuss the topic of faith. Those in both lines of authority would be well served to consider the relevance of faith to the broader issues being discussed here.

Authority Is Built on the Continuous Development of Faith

ISKCON's greatest asset is the faith of its members. Even if there are no temples, no projects, no income, and only a few followers, if there is faith, there will be prosperity, in the true sense of the term. Consider what Śrīla Prabhupāda has written in the following letter:

"There is a proverb in Sanskrit literature that enthusiastic persons achieve the favor of the Goddess of Fortune. In the Western part of the world there is tangible example of this slogan. People in this part of the world are very much enthusiastic in material advancement and they have got it. Similarly, according to the instructions of Srila Rupa Goswami, if we become enthusiastic in spiritual matters, then we also get success in that way. Take for example, I came to your country in ripe old age, but I had one asset: enthusiasm and faith in my Spiritual Master. I think these assets only are giving me some lights of hope, whatever I have achieved so far with your cooperation."⁶

And in his purport to "Bhagavad-gita As It Is" 9.3, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: "Faith is the most important factor for progress in Krishna consciousness. . . . It is only by faith that one can advance in Krishna consciousness."

Those in the spiritual line of authority should preach and behave in such a way that they nourish and protect their dependents' faith in pure devotional service, in our sampradaya, in Śrīla Prabhupāda, and in ISKCON, including its management. Spiritual masters also have the added responsibility of nourishing and protecting ISKCON's managers' faith that they (the spiritual masters) are fit representatives of the spiritual line of authority. If the spiritual masters act in a contrary way, they will erode the faith of others.

⁶Letter to Jaya Govinda, Tittenhurst, 15 October 1969.

Conversely, those in the managerial line of authority should manage, preach, and behave in such a way that they build and sustain the trust of those in the spiritual line of authority and their disciples. By the managers showing genuine concern for the devotees under their care, the spiritual masters will then naturally encourage their disciples to assist the manager in his service. But if managers act in a way contrary to spiritual principles, in conflict with the spiritual interests of those devotees for whom they are responsible, that will also erode others' faith.

Therefore, to safeguard the faith of all of ISKCON's members, it is necessary that we delineate clear principles for both lines of authority to follow.

Spiritual Masters Are Not Independent

To further clarify the need to introduce well-defined principles, we will examine the position of spiritual masters within the managerial structure of ISKCON.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present, he was ISKCON's sole initiating spiritual master, its preeminent śikṣā guru, and the supreme managerial authority, superior to the GBC:

"[...] we are managing our Krishna Consciousness Movement by the Governing Body Commission, GBC. We have got about 20 GBC's looking after the whole world affair, and above the GBC I am there. Below the GBC there are the temple president, secretary, treasurer in every centre. So the temple president is responsible to the GBC and the GBC is responsible to me. In this way we are managing.."⁷

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical absence the structure is now somewhat different. His Divine Grace instructed that the GBC should be the ultimate managing authority for ISKCON. At the same time he indicated that the Society should have multiple spiritual masters:

"Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bona fide representative can become a spiritual master, and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bona fide spiritual master to spread Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world."⁸

This gives rise to a challenging situation. Many spiritual organizations have one spiritual master operating as the sole head of the institution, whereas ISKCON has many spiritual masters within one organization, in addition to a "governing body" that operates as the "ultimate managing authority" for the institution as a whole. Those serving as spiritual masters in ISKCON are meant to follow the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda and work under the GBC Body.

The spiritual masters are thus obligated to follow the Society's policies and codes of conduct, including those outlined in this GBC-approved paper, and to abide by the decisions of its management. Included within that obligation is the responsibility to inspire their disciples to associate with and serve within ISKCON's already-existing managerial and devotee-care

⁷Letter to: Vasudeva, New Vrindaban, 30 June, 1976

⁸Letter to Madhusudana, Navadvipa, 2 November 1967.

sangas, located within their disciple's area of residence rather than only inspiring them to associate with themselves (the spiritual masters) or with their sangas and projects that have no connection with the ISKCON zonal management structure.

Disciples Should Avoid Creating Conflict Between Their Authorities

Disciples should also understand the greater picture within ISKCON. Certainly a spiritual master may be more spiritually advanced than any given GBC member or any other ISKCON manager (while there may also be cases where the local GBC or ISKCON manager may be more spiritually advanced than a particular spiritual master).

Nevertheless, concerning the spiritual management of the Society, as we have already clearly shown, Śrīla Prabhupāda invested authority in the GBC and its individual members and in other ISKCON managers.

If a disciple has the mistaken conviction that his or her spiritual master is above the GBC and ISKCON's laws and policies, that should be corrected by the spiritual master and other authorities. Otherwise, that misconception may lead to actions which create conflict between his or her spiritual and managerial authorities

Indeed, all disciples should follow their ISKCON authorities in the same way that all initiating and instructing spiritual masters should follow their own authorities within ISKCON.

By both example and precept, therefore, all spiritual masters should not only educate and train their disciples in the development of bhakti but should also educate and train them about their relation to the managerial structure of ISKCON, as well as about the spiritual masters' own relation to that structure.

Principles Being Introduced

EDUCATION OF GURU'S DISCIPLES

It is the responsibility of the spiritual masters within ISKCON to help every one of their disciples clearly understand the following:

- 1) The spiritual master draws his authority from his fidelity to Śrīla Prabhupāda. This includes fidelity to Śrīla Prabhupāda's order to work within his mission, ISKCON.
- 2) The spiritual master is a member of ISKCON and, as such, is accountable to the collective will of its leadership, the GBC Body.
- 3) The spiritual master does not derive any specific right or prerogative over ISKCON resources simply by dint of his being a spiritual master. Moreover, the spiritual master should not misuse his rights and prerogatives over his disciples.
- 4) The disciples should follow their ISKCON authorities in the same way that all initiating and instructing spiritual masters set an example by following their own ISKCON authorities.

5) Disciples have the essential task of surrendering to Krishna through the spiritual master, and included within this task is recognizing and respecting other superiors within ISKCON's management who are helping them in their process of spiritual progress.

6) Spiritually mature managers may be the main śikṣā gurus for devotees who are not their initiated disciples, and such relationships are to be fully encouraged by the initiating spiritual masters.

CONDUCT OF GURUS

Moreover, to show respect toward the managerial line of authority and to help nurture and protect managers' faith in the spiritual line of authority, every spiritual master should:

- 1) When first visiting or preferably before arriving at a recognized ISKCON temple or preaching center, ask the local manager how he (the spiritual master) may serve that yatra during his visit (rather than the spiritual master only pursuing his own agenda).
- 2) Before planning a visit to a zone or region where there is no local temple or preaching center, first ask the Zonal GBC if there is a vision local leaders have for that place or region which he (the spiritual master) could serve.
- 3) If there is a disagreement in terms of managerial decisions, do his best to cooperate with the relevant authority. If no agreement can be reached, then the spiritual master should defer to the decision of the relevant authority, with the option of appealing to higher authorities if necessary.

DUTIES OF MANAGERS

To build cooperation within ISKCON, show respect for the spiritual line of authority, and help nurture and protect the faith of spiritual masters and their disciples in the managerial line of authority, all managers should:

- 1) Be receptive to advice given by initiating spiritual masters and other itinerant preachers visiting their area of jurisdiction, especially on matters concerning devotee care.
- 2) Protect the faith that their dependents have in pure devotional service and in the principle of accepting and serving an initiating spiritual master and instructing spiritual masters.
- 3) Encourage and support a system of devotee care (i.e., counselor system, brahminical advisory board, etc.) within their sphere of management.
- 4) Assure that the managers in their line of authority are themselves trained in the principles of devotee care.
- 5) Inform visiting spiritual masters about the spiritual health and overall well-being of their disciples.

6) Encourage and help visiting spiritual masters and other itinerant preachers to reach out to those disciples who are in need and who would be most responsive to their help.

7) Insure that there is an equitable system for initiation recommendations which does not condone unwarranted pressure or manipulation from the local management for managerial gains.

Summary

To promote the full flourishing of devotees' spiritual lives, Śrīla Prabhupāda created for ISKCON a managerial structure with clear lines of authority. Every member of ISKCON should respect this structure and learn to work within it. The goal of the managerial structure is spiritual: to facilitate the spiritual advancement of ISKCON's members through association with devotees, opportunities for service, and effective preaching strategies. Simultaneously, ISKCON affirms the fundamental importance of accepting initiation from a bona fide spiritual master.

Of paramount importance, of course, is our Founder-Acarya, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is the initiating spiritual master of many devotees in ISKCON and the foremost instructing spiritual master of every devotee, now and in the future. Also important are the many initiating and instructing spiritual masters now serving in ISKCON.

All spiritual masters and their disciples should likewise appreciate the importance of the many managers in our society, who help guide and train disciples and oversee the facilities ISKCON provides for their spiritual advancement. All spiritual masters and their disciples should work cooperatively within ISKCON's managerial system, both to benefit themselves spiritually and to help the Society flourish.

This cooperative, mutually respectful spirit is the best way to preserve the Society's unity, please Śrīla Prabhupāda, and expand the sankirtana mission.

In the mood of Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Prabhupāda desired that the sankirtana movement be spread all over the world, "to every town and village." He demonstrated that desire by his constant traveling, writing, and speaking. He requested his disciples to open centers far and wide, distribute his books, arrange for attractive festivals, distribute prasada, etc. It was Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire that ISKCON continue to expand, to rise as the benediction moon of Lord Caitanya's mercy.

It is for this purpose that Śrīla Prabhupāda established ISKCON as a spiritual institution with a managerial structure. The purpose of this structure is to maintain the standards he established, to offer shelter and spiritual nourishment to the devotees, and to support and increase the sankirtana mission. To please Śrīla Prabhupāda by delivering the mercy of Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai to the conditioned souls, everyone within ISKCON—spiritual masters, disciples, and managers alike—should work cooperatively within this structure.

Appendix 8

G.B.C Resolution on ISKCON Disciple Course

RESOLVED (March 2014):

That the ISKCON Disciple Course, as developed by the GBC Guru Services Committee, shall be a mandatory pre-requisite for all devotees accepting first or second initiation by an ISKCON guru, effective Janmastami, 2015. After that date, no guru may initiate a disciple who has not first completed the Disciple Course. This is in addition to current requirements of new initiates.

Furthermore, all GBC Members and Temple Presidents shall ensure that within their respective areas of authority, no later than Janmastami, 2015:

- Devotees shall be advised and encouraged to complete the Disciple Course before selecting a diksa-guru
- Devotees shall have reasonable access to enroll in the Disciple Course
- A sufficient number of teachers shall be identified and facilitated to teach the Course
- No devotee shall be allowed to accept initiation before completing the Course (subject to exemptions below)

Teachers/facilitators of the ISKCON Disciple Course must:

- a. Beinitiated for at least 5 years
- b. Have completed the ISKCON Disciple Course
- c. Be recommended by their Disciple Course facilitator
- d. Have completed the VTE Teacher Training Course 1 (TTC1)* or have equivalent training or experience
- e. Have the approval of their local GBC representative
- f. Teach from the official curriculum, manuals and other materials as approved by the GBC Guru Services Committee

Illiterate devotees are welcome to participate in the Course. Upon completion they shall be required to undergo a minimal oral examination at the discretion of the teacher. In rare cases of the infirmity or terminal illness of a prospective disciple the requirement for completing the Disciple Course may be waived by the local Temple President.

GBC members who find a specific area within their jurisdiction needs more time for implementation due to exceptional circumstances, may request an extension of up to one year by submitting a request no later than July 31, 2015, to the GBC Executive Committee for approval.

*An exemption for the requirement of the TTC1 may be granted by the local GBC Zonal Secretary based upon an assessment of the potential teacher's maturity and teaching skills. The Mayapur Institute shall provide to the GBC a list of criteria by which such evaluations should be made.

Appendix 9

Principles for Creating a Diksa-guru System for ISKCON

ISKCON Position Paper, GBC Resolution 312 (March 2017)

This paper explains the authority of ISKCON's Governing Body Commission (GBC) to create a system for devotees to take up the service of *diksa-guru* within the society, focusing on the principles behind the system.

Through many written and spoken instructions, Srila Prabhupada made it abundantly clear that after his departure the GBC should serve as ISKCON's ultimate managerial authority. In his will he states:

1. *The Governing Body Commission (GBC) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness.*

[LD 6: Declaration of Will, June 1977]

Although within the Vedic literature we may not find specific references describing a system of management with Vaisnavas working under a central authority such as the GBC, Srila Prabhupada created one. In doing so he followed the order of his Guru Maharaja, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who requested his disciples to create a governing body. The significance of this is discussed in *Caitanya-caritamra*, *Adi* 12.8, purport:

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati 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 acarya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of acarya, and they split into two factions over who the next acarya would be.

Similarly, in the Vedic scriptures we will not find directions for Vaisnava institutions to endorse or authorize spiritual positions like *sannyasa* or *diksa-guru*. Our evidence for the legitimacy of the GBC establishing such processes consists of Srila Prabhupada's instructions and activities.

Concerning such important functions as approving *sannyasa* candidates, during his time with us Srila Prabhupada gradually turned these over to the GBC. In ISKCON's early years Srila Prabhupada personally awarded *sannyasa* to those he thought qualified. Later he asked the GBC Body to establish systems for assessing potential *sannyasis*:

For taking sannyasa you may consult your GBC member as we shall be starting a new policy where the sannyasa candidate must meet certain requirements to be determined by the GBC. [Letter to Danavir, 6 February 1973]

Your program for those who are desiring to take sannyasa is approved by me and I request that you make something concrete and distribute it to all the other GBC members and amongst yourselves you may decide who will take sannyasa.

[Letter to Satsvarupa, 10 February 1973]

Since Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, the GBC Ministry for Sannyasa Services has developed systems for assessing and training candidates for *sannyasa* and recommending them to the GBC for the GBC's final approval.

Just as Srila Prabhupada established that the qualifications of prospective *sannyasis* should be assessed, he similarly indicated that *diksa gurus* should have certain qualifications.

Srila Prabhupada expected that after his physical departure his disciples would continue the disciplic succession, serving as gurus and accepting disciples into the *parampara*. He stated this as early as 1967:

Anyone following the order of Lord Chaitanya under the guidance of His bonafide representative, can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bonafide spiritual master to spread Krishna consciousness throughout the whole world. I want it. . . .

[Letter to Madhusudana, 2 November 1967]

In 1975 he wrote that after his departure he wanted his disciples to become *diksa-gurus* if they developed the necessary qualifications:

Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide spiritual master and spread Krsna consciousness very widely. That will make me and Krsna very happy. [Letter to Tusta Krsna Swami, 2 December 1975]

Srila Prabhupada wanted his disciples to attain a certain level of spiritual advancement before taking up the service of giving *diksa*. The minimum level he expected is expressed in the following quotes:

Generally the spiritual master comes from the group of such eternal associates of the Lord; but anyone who follows the principles of such ever liberated persons is as good as one in the above mentioned group. . . . A person who is liberated acharya and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acharya by strictly following the disciplic succession. [Letter to Janardana, 26 April 1968]

Tamal Krsna: *Well, I have studied myself and all of your disciples, and it's a clear fact that we are all conditioned souls, so we cannot be guru. Maybe one day it may be possible . . .*

Prabhupada: *Hmm.*

Tamal Krsna: *. . . but not now.*

Prabhupada: *Yes. I shall choose some guru. I shall say, "Now you become acarya. You become authorized." I am waiting for that. You become all acarya. I retire completely. But the training must be complete.*

Tamal Krsna: *The process of purification must be there.*

Prabhupada: *Oh, yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahaprabhu wants that. amara ajnaya guru hana. "You become guru." [laughs] But be qualified. Little thing, strictly follower . . .*

Tamal Krsna: *Not rubber stamp.*

Prabhupada: *Then you'll not be effective. You can cheat, but it will not be effective.*

[Room Conversation, 22 April 1977, Bombay]

An example of training and assessment for initiating spiritual masters that could be further developed is scriptural training and tests. As early as 1969 Srila Prabhupada explained a future program of sastric training so that his disciples would have the necessary philosophical knowledge to act as initiating spiritual masters:

Next January there will be an examination on this Bhagavad-gita. Papers will be sent by me to all centers, and those securing the minimum passing grade will be given the title as Bhakti-sastri. Similarly, another examination will be held on Lord Caitanya's Appearance Day in February, 1970 and it will be upon Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita. Those passing will get the title of Bhakti-vaibhava. Another examination will be held sometimes in 1971 on the four books, Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and Nectar of Devotion. One who will pass this examination will be awarded with the title of Bhaktivedanta. I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program. So we should not simply publish these books for reading by outsiders, but our students must be well versed in all of our books so that we can be prepared to defeat all opposing parties in the matter of self-realization.

[Letter to: Hansadutta -- Los Angeles 3 January, 1969]

While neither Srila Prabhupada nor the GBC put the specifics of this idea in place, the principle is clear that devotees who accept disciples are subject to specific training, standards and oversight before they are allowed to initiate disciples.

After creating the GBC in 1970, Srila Prabhupada wrote: *I have formed this GBC for that purpose, to keep the devotional standards at the highest level and at the same time to manage a world-wide organization. [Letter to Rupanuga, 4 Nov 1970]*

Certainly the qualifications of gurus (and the qualifications of disciples) fall within the "devotional standards" mentioned by Srila Prabhupada to be safeguarded, and in some cases clarified, by the GBC.

Srila Prabhupada indicated the need for sastric degrees for many levels of service in ISKCON, and he left the duty to clarify and codify those degrees and levels to the GBC: *As far as the Bhakti-sastri and other examinations are concerned, that we will discuss at the GBC meeting. [Letter to Nitai, 24 Jan 1976]*

The persons best able to ascertain whether a proposed guru has been sufficiently steady in his service and loyal to Srila Prabhupada are the senior devotees who have known and served with the candidate for many years; that is, his peers and seniors in his geographic areas of service. Prospective diksa-gurus are assessed by a group of senior ISKCON leaders from the area where they reside and preach to determine whether they have the minimum qualifications required to accept disciples according to Srila Prabhupada's instructions. A final review is done by the GBC.

The GBC has also provided the "Spiritual Leadership Seminar: Being a guru in ISKCON" to assist diksa gurus in their service of caring for disciples and serving within Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON. There are also regular sangas where the gurus, sannyasis and GBC associate with each other.

The GBC, following Srila Prabhupada's example and instructions, thus understands that one of its duties is to implement systems of assessment and training so that qualified devotees may take up the service of becoming initiating spiritual masters in ISKCON.

Appendix 10

Norms for Classroom Behavior

During the course, in order to maintain an appropriate learning environment, students will agree to follow the following guidelines.

1. We will be present for the entire course.
2. We will raise hands to contribute.
3. We will value student contributions whether or not we agree with them.
4. We will refrain from side conversations.
5. We will refrain from making & receiving mobile phone calls during class.
6. We will observe confidentiality within and without the classroom.
7. We will refrain from borrowing strength from status or position.
8. We respect the right of the individual to withdraw, without stating reasons, from any exercise which makes them feel unduly uncomfortable.
9. We will each accept full responsibility for success in achieving our desired outcomes.
10. We will confront issues or behaviour, not people.
11. We will each honour any agreement reached.

Appendix 11

Further Reading

For further information on the subject of discipleship in ISKCON, students may refer to the following suggested publications.

Spiritual Master and Disciple

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Bhaktivedanta Book Trust

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The Founder-Acarya of ISKCON

GBC Foundational Document
Ravindra Svarūpa Dāsa
ISKCON GBC Press

How to Find Guru

Gopal Jiu Publications

The Process of Inquiry

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami
Gopal Jiu Publications

The Worship of Sri Guru

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami
Gopal Jiu Publications

The Siksa-guru: Implementing Tradition in ISKCON

Sivarama Swami
Torchlight Publishing

Siksa Outside ISKCON?

Sivarama Swami
Lal Publishing

When Good Fortune Arises

Gopal Jiu Publications

ISKCON Disciples Course

Suggested 4 Day Schedule ⁹

Day 1	Unit One: Introduction, Theory and Context	
<u>10.30AM -1.30PM</u>		
Lesson 1	Welcome & Introduction	30 mins
Lesson 2	Guru-tattva and Paramparā	75 mins
<u>3.30-6.30PM</u>		
Lesson 3	Śrīla Prabhupāda - ISKCON Founder Ācārya	75 mins
Lesson 4	ISKCON Gurus	90 mins
Day 2	Unit Two: Establishing the Relationship with Guru	
<u>10.30AM -1.30PM</u>		
Lesson 5	Guru-pādāśraya	75 mins
Lesson 6	Selection of Guru	90 mins
<u>3.30-6.30PM</u>		
Lesson 7	Initiation Vows	75 mins
Lesson 8	Guru-pūjā	90 mins
Day 3	Unit 3: Acting in Relationship with the Guru	
<u>10.30AM -1.30PM</u>		
Lesson 9	Guru- sevā	75 mins
Lesson 10	Guru vapu and vāṇī-sevā	90 mins
<u>3.30-6.30PM</u>		
Lesson 11	Guru-tyāga	75 mins
Lesson 12	Presenting One's Guru	90 mins
Day 4	Unit 4: Co-operatively Fulfilling the Relationship Assessment /Consolidation	
<u>10.30AM -1.30PM</u>		
Lesson 13	Relationships within ISKCON	75 mins
Lesson 14	Course Round Up	90 mins
<u>3.30-5.30PM</u>		
	Assessment Units 3-4	120 mins

⁹ Note that the scheduled may be adjusted according to convenience.