

Hansadutta's response (in blue) to Bhakti Caru Swami

Correcting ISKCON's Guru System

By Bhakti Charu Swami

Being enlivened by so many thought-provoking observations and concepts on the subject of guru-tattva and the ISKCON institution I feel inspired to express some ideas and understandings on this issue.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, while reviving Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's Sankirtana movement, realized that the massive task of spreading Krishna Consciousness all over the world, in every town and village, would not be possible without the collective endeavors of committed devotees for generations to come. Therefore he saw the need for an institution, and gave the blueprint of that institution in the form of his "Namahatta" (the market place of the holy name) and "Visva Vaisnava Raja-Sabha." (the Royal Assembly of the Vaisnavas from All Over the World). Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati Thakura gave a shape to that concept in the form of his "Gaudiya Matha" and when that institution fell apart, Srila Prabhupada revived the spirit of his Guru Maharaja through ISKCON.

It is important to note that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati Thakura and Srila Prabhupada, all three of them, gave more importance to the institution than to their own authority - in spite of being the founders and organizers of their institutions they placed themselves as ordinary members of their respective institutions. For example, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura identified himself as the sweeper of the Namahatta. Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati Thakura called himself the servant of the Gaudiya Matha, and Srila Prabhupada identified himself as a mere member of the Governing body of ISKCON.

Of course Prabhupada displayed the example of "Being a mere member of ISKCON " to teach us humility, he nevertheless adamantly insisted that "Founder Acharya of ISKCON " be prominently displayed on the cover of his books, he furthermore instructed " I wish that each and every temple be independent, keeping the Acharya in the center".

Just as Krishna played the perfect friend, messenger, chariot driver, family member, henpecked husband and lover while on earth. Still in Bhagavad-gita he demanded that everyone surrender to him, because he is the supreme personality of Godhead. After giving so many instructions -Karma Yoga, Bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga, astanga Yoga, Sankhya yoga etc..... - to Arjuna , Krishna concludes everything by saying , " Forget

all this Dharma and just do what I say, and don't worry (If there is some fault or wrong) I WILL PROTECT YOU FROM ALL SINFUL REACTION, DO NOT FEAR.

In the final moments of Prabhupada's life he issued his all important and final instructions for continuing initiations in ISKCON by naming 11 RITTVIK REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ACHARYA. By ignoring this final prescription of the Acharya, disaster has befallen ISKCON, and will continue to fall until it is perfectly and unhesitatingly obeyed by one and all ISKCON devotees.

Although Srila Prabhupada spread Krishna Consciousness all over the world within the amazingly short span of ten years time, he knew that he would not be able to spread it in every town and village during his lifetime; rather, it would take generations to achieve that. That is why he was so emphatic about the effective continuity of his mission through his ISKCON. Personalities such as Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati Thakura and Srila Prabhupada come to grace this world only once in a blue moon. It is Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's causeless mercy that those three personalities came in such a succession. Their appearances on this planet was actually Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's divine arrangement for reviving His Sankirtana movement and fulfill His prediction that Krishna Consciousness movement would spread in every town and village on this planet. Although, being empowered by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, they could achieve anything and perform incredible miracles, yet, for the sake of fulfilling the ultimate purpose of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission they emphasized the collective continuity of the movement through an institution.

It is the King who makes the Kingdom, not the Kingdom that makes the King. Prabhupada made ISKCON, not ISKCON made Prabhupada. Don't try to subvert Srila Prabhupada to suit your rules of the institution. The last prescription of the doctor takes precedence over all other prescriptions before it. The patient cannot quote the medical books to contradict the diagnosis and prescription ordered by the Doctor.

The prescription to ACT AS RITTVIK REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ACHARYA is the premise which Prabhupada emphasized and established by writing the July 9th letter for the COLLECTIVE CONTINUITY of the ISKCON institution. HOW CAN YOU EXCLUDE, OR IGNORE THIS ALL IMPORTANT AND FINAL PRESCRIPTION GIVEN BY THE ACHARYA FOR THE COLLECTIVE CONTINUTY OF THE ISKCON INSTITUTION? to "ACT AS RITTVIK REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ACHARYA" a single time in your whole presentation, why? Why has RITTVIK REPRESENTATIVE become a dirty word in ISKCON. It is not something invented by others; it was introduced by Srila Prabhupada, the Sampradaya ACHARYA. PRESCRIPTION

Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati Thakura was an extremely brilliant personality who attracted countless luminaries of his time within the fold of his Gaudiya Matha. However, soon after his disappearance when the Gaudiya Matha disintegrated, in spite of all those luminaries the propagation of Krishna Consciousness practically stopped.

Srila Prabhupada explained that, that happened because most his prominent followers could not understand the importance of continuing his mission through the institution he established. They held on to the traditional concept and concluded that a spiritual heritage could not effectively continue through an institution managed by a bunch of mundane managers, they defied the instruction of their spiritual master and appointed an acarya [who eventually fell down] the institution that he so meticulously structured collapsed.

Srila Prabhupada, in order to protect his ISKCON from such an unfortunate possibility, emphatically told us not to make the same mistake that his god-brothers made after his Guru Maharaja's disappearance. He advised us to continue the mission under the authority of a collective management structure. Nevertheless, after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, we in ISKCON also made a similar mistake. Thinking that Srila Prabhupada had appointed 11 successors we also plunged in to the same syndrome of appointing spiritual heads of the institution presuming that after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance they inherited ISKCON.

Now here, why do you avoid quoting Srila Prabhupada's all important, simple and clear written instructions to the whole of ISKCON, APPOINTING, 11 SENIOR MEN TO "ACT AS RITVIK REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ACHARYA" along with three subsequent supporting letters, two to myself and one to Kirtananada Swami ?

In 1987, about 10 years after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, this mistake was addressed by concerned leading devotees of ISKCON, but was not fully corrected. Just by adding more gurus and allowing them to initiate wherever they could attract disciples, that mistake was only diluted to some extent but was not really corrected.

The mistake was not diluted, the mistake was compounded by adding more Gurus, the mistake was magnified exponentially.

Recently, the GBC body became painfully aware that through that mistake a parallel line of authority has been created in ISKCON which is causing a considerable amount of damage to the institution and is stifling the growth of the movement. It is very laudable of the GBC body that they have taken this issue very seriously and are working hard to rectify it.

You make it sound like the GBC's are working hard like prisoners in a Russian GULAG. All the hard work has long ago been done by Srila Prabhupada. It was Prabhupada at the age of 70 years who came to America, Prabhupada who painstakingly translated and wrote 60 books, it was Prabhupada who empowered thousands of hippies, freaks, acid heads, lunatics and losers to go to all parts of the world and open and build temples and centers, who then consequently recruited thousands more meat headed, drug addicts, women hunters, gamblers and goons. When the dust settled and Prabhupada was preparing to leave senior disciples gathered around him in Vrindaban with the all consuming important question on their mind- WHO IS GOING TO BE THE GURU, WHO, HOW ,WHERE AND WHEN CAN WE BE GURUS- that was what everyone wanted to know. In a July 9th 1977 letter Srila Prabhupada gave the answer , it was his last PRESCRIPTION, naming 11 disciples TO AS RITTVIK REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ACHARYA HENCEFORTH,..... WHOEVER IS NEAREST,..... not DEAREST, as it has been concocted by one HIGHER AUTHORITY. If you change, ONE LETTER THE WHOLE THING WILL BE SPOILED....." NEAREST, was changed to DEAREST, the rest is history.

In order to effectively establish an institution we need two essential elements -

THE TWO ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS ARE DISCIPLINE and OBEDIENCE TO THE ORDER OF THE ACHARYA, SRILA PRABHUPADA. Discipline means disciple and disciple means WHO VOLUNTARILY OBEYS THE ACHARYA.

the head of the institution, and its management structure. In ISKCON we have to be absolutely clear that Srila Prabhupada is the head of the institution and he will continue to be that as long as the institution lasts, and the management structure Srila Prabhupada established - the GBC, temple presidents, departmental heads, etc, must be fully functional without any deviation.

If we compare the institution of ISKCON to a corporate structure, then we must recognize that Srila Prabhupada is the proprietor of ISKCON, and the other leaders of this institution are the managers. The managers manage, and although they get their remunerations and incentives for that, the profit belongs to the proprietor.

Primarily everyone is a DISCIPLE first, under voluntary obedience, and DISCIPLINE, then he is either a GBC, RITTVIK, COOK, SANKIRTAN MAN, PUJARI, MECHANIC, MANAGER , MAN , WOMAN OR ANIMAL ETC.....I don't remember anyone getting remunerations (as many are getting salaries now) for their service to Prabhupada.

In ISKCON, it is important that we clearly recognize the fact that everything in ISKCON, including even all the devotees, belongs to Srila Prabhupada,

It is not enough to recognize Prabhupada, more importantly we have to OBEY PRABHUPADA. If you really believe that Prabhupada is the CREATOR, MANTAINER, AND ENJOYER of ISKCON (Bhoktaram yajna tapasam sarva loka mahesvaram ...) then what is the difficulty in accepting Prabhupada's prescription to ACT AS RITTVIK REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ACHARYA ??? Shout it from the roof tops and be proud of it..... why the persistent ignorance of Srila Prabhupada's final instructions ? Give one good reason for this all pervading ignorance in the matter of following Srila Prabhupada's written prescription to all of his disciples at the 11th hour of his life?? What is the reason for this determined bull headed ignorance of the ISKCON leadership??.....,

The answer is..... ; EVERYONE WANTS TO BE A GURU, NO ONE WANTS TO SERVE THE GURU, WE WANT TO BE GURU AND LORD IT OVER WEALTH, WOMAN AND PRESTIGE. I know, because I fell into this burning pitfall of blazing fire - MAYA'S last TWO snares - I AM A GURU ! - I AM GOD!

Then only this mistake that is stifling the growth of our institution will be rectified and Krishna Consciousness movement will start to spread once again, all over the world, in leaps and bounds.

It will be easy to dismiss what I have written, I am after all the worst offender, that is admitted by me. Still as a friend I am writing you, not as a competitor but in the spirit of Prabhupada.

Your humble servant,
Hansadutta das