

a response to: His Grace Hari Sauri Prabhu

HARI SAURI'S MINUTES TURN BACK THE CLOCK



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“One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, who is authorised by his predecessor spiritual master. This is called *diksa-vidhana*.”

(S.B. 4.8.54, purport)



by Krishnakant

HARI SAURI'S MINUTES TURN BACK THE CLOCK

This is a reply to an article written by His Grace Hari Sauri Prabhu (henceforward referred to as the 'author') that was posted on ISKCON COM and CHAKRA recently. In it he introduces evidence from the GBC minutes book to try and shed some new light on the 'guru issue'. This evidence was previously used in the 1990 ISKCON journal, and contains the following sentence which is pivotal to the author's entire position:

'Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance.'

The notion that Srila Prabhupada actually appointed eleven *diksa* gurus for after his departure was the identical assumption on which the discredited zonal *acarya* system was founded. This assumption was challenged in the mid-eighties and replaced with what we call the M.A.S.S. (multiple *acarya* successor system). Thus the 'understanding' of what Srila Prabhupada supposedly said on May 28th 1977, as recorded in these hand written minutes, has already been rejected long ago by the GBC, the very body the author is using these minutes to defend. We will first show how the most senior devotees in ISKCON have long ago rejected this idea of *diksa* appointments, and then go on to expose the other flaws and contradictions in the author's brief paper.

SENIOR DEVOTEES AND GBC CONTRADICT SO-CALLED GBC MINUTES:

"Srila Prabhupada did not appoint anyone to be guru for the future, he appointed *ritviks* to continue in his presence. That much is accepted by everyone."

(His Holiness Jayadvaita Swami Maharaja (San Diego 1990).)

"And it's a fact that Srila Prabhupada never said 'alright here is the next *acarya*, or the next eleven *acaryas* and they are authorised gurus for the movement, for the world.' He did not do that."

(His Grace Ravindra Svarupa prabhu. (San Diego 1990))

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

(His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami Maharaja. (Pyramid house confessions).)

"There is no appointment of gurus or successors, only a recommendation that certain disciples start the natural process."

(The entire GBC, in 'Disciple of my Disciple' page 4 which was released only last year).

Since the GBC, along with its staunchest defenders, no longer accept the GBC's hand written minutes as accurate, we do not see why we should either, particularly since they contradict Srila Prabhupada's signed policy statement on how he wanted initiations to run within ISKCON (**the July 9th order**). It should also be pointed out that nowhere in the controversial May 28th tape does Srila Prabhupada say anything about appointing *diksa* gurus for after his departure.

Extracts from the author's article shall be boxed, our responses follow.

STRANGE QUESTIONS:

3) In the absence of Srila Prabhupada what is the procedure for first, second, and sannyasa initiations?

4) What is the relationship of the person who gives this initiation to the person he give it to?

Above are two of the questions the GBC determined should be asked of Srila Prabhupada prior to the May 28th 1977 conversation (as reproduced from the GBC minutes book by the author in his article).

The reader might like to consider question 3) in relation to the picture, often painted by GBC's and their apologists, of how the M.A.S.S. was automatically 'understood' by every devotee since it was **'what Srila Prabhupada always consistently taught for ten long years, and was our tradition for millions of years before that'**. We are often quoted the **'law of disciplic succession'** as something which was clearly recognised and mentioned hundreds of times by Srila Prabhupada - everyone just becomes a *diksa* guru on the departure of the *acarya*- no question about it. Today, if a devotee even questions the above assumptions, he is labelled an offensive moron, wholly bereft of transcendental insight. **So why did the GBC ask this question in May 1977?** Note it is not asking about the procedure for creating or selecting these 'inevitable' *diksa* gurus; nor is it seeking to clarify the implementation of this well known and customary 'law of disciplic succession', but rather how initiations would continue **AT ALL**. Thus we have the most senior devotees in the entire movement, who within a year were being worshipped as though they were as good as Lord God Almighty, all asking the dumbest question imaginable - (according to the current paradigm of intimidation).

Other serious doubts arise when we look at question 4). It is just unbelievable that such a question could ever have been conceived of, unless there had been some prior mention of '*ritviks*' or 'officiators' by Srila Prabhupada. It would be totally unnecessary, what to speak of plain daft, to ask- **'what will be the relationship between those who are *diksa* gurus and those who are their disciples'**!! Thus the very fact that question 4) was even asked forces any rational person to conclude that the one thing the GBCs were not expecting to be appointed was straight forward '*regular vanilla*' *diksa* gurus. The GBC must have had some idea that *ritviks*, or some similar such entities, were on the cards. If not, perhaps the author can enlighten us as to why such questions were ever asked? (We raised this issue regarding question 4) on page 8 of '*The Final Order Still Stands*' and have never received an explanation).

MINUTES NOT AN ACCURATE RECORD:

NOTE: These questions were duly asked to Srila Prabhupada before the afternoon session. His answers were recorded on tape and they were also recorded in the GBC minutes book on the next page after the above questions were written down, as follows

This is a subtle misrepresentation, since Srila Prabhupada's answers, as given on the tape, are not recorded verbatim in the minutes book. A brief glance at the wording of the hand written GBC minutes is enough to see there is little resemblance to any of the four different official transcripts of the May 28th tape. Rather the GBC minutes book records what the GBC thought were the answers Srila Prabhupada had given, expressed very much in their own words.

AUTHOR'S PRINCIPAL EVIDENCE (in bold):

For the purpose of recording information, Srila Prabhupada's answers to the above questions were given as follows:

- 1) GBC members shall remain permanently. If a GBC member leaves, the GBC can appoint new GBC members.
- 2) Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master.**
- 3) New translations of Vedic works can be published in the future, even after Srila Prabhupada's departure, but they can only be done by one who is very expert. At present, Srila Prabhupada acknowledged, there are very few such men.

THE PLOT THICKENS:

As already stated these minutes are not hard evidence for what Srila Prabhupada intended or stated, since they were neither authored, checked or signed by him, (unlike the July 9th letter). Further we have in our possession a typed version of these very minutes in the form of a GBC report which was allegedly distributed soon after this meeting. This typed report of the meeting is identical in all respects to the hand-written GBC minutes book (as above), except for one important omission, minute 2), the very same minute the author deems pivotal to his entire case. This minute for some reason, has been totally removed.

It seems that whenever the GBC or their apologists bring up the May 28th conversation as a means of modifying the final July 9th order, they simply raise more questions than they answer i.e.,- tapes exhibiting strong signs of falsification, written minutes which do not properly correspond with a contemporaneously typed report, suggested appointments which have long since been rejected etc etc. Thus the whiff of intrigue merely grows stronger by the day.

Attempts have been made to discount the tape of the May 28 conversation by claiming that, according to professional analysis, the tape contains many breaks which could indicate splicing or tampering. As their argument goes, it would therefore be unacceptable as evidence in a court of law.

Firstly we would like to congratulate His Grace Hari Sauri prabhu for at least acknowledging the existence of such a professional analysis. All the other recent GBC papers have continued to trumpet evidence from the tape as if no such report ever existed. The one point the author has curiously omitted to mention is the fact that it was the GBC themselves who were responsible for commissioning the analysis in the first place. Thus the assertion that the tape *'would be unacceptable as evidence in a court of law'*, is not just our 'argument', it is the considered opinion of a world expert forensic analyst (Perle) who was appointed by the GBC themselves to examine the tape! Thus the party responsible for discounting the tape as suitable evidence is not 'us' but the GBC. Of course the GBC may chose to ignore their own expert, but this in itself might appear rather suspicious. (In any event since the conversation only clearly confirms *ritvik* for after departure we are not troubled either way).

2) Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master.

(Minutes from the morning session of an extra ordinary meeting of the Governing Body Commission of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, held in Vrindavana, India, on May 28th, 1977.)

With regards the above minute 2 the author states the following:

First, we find written corroboration of the taped conversation in the official minutes book of the GBC. Since the minutes book would be accepted by any court of law as official evidence of the dealings of the GBC body, there can be no doubt that the said conversation took place and that Srila Prabhupada did in fact state categorically that the disciples whom he would name would accept disciples of their own, who would be his grand disciples after his departure.

The above conclusion is completely groundless. We have never doubted that 'said conversation took place'. This is not an issue of contention, and thus to even mention it is irrelevant. The issue has always revolved around what was the intended outcome or conclusion of this conversation, and whether the tape is a completely faithful record of it. The GBC minutes book would merely be a record of what the GBC thought was the conclusion of the conversation. This also has never been in doubt. We all know only too well what the GBC thought, and are still thinking about what was supposed to happen after Srila Prabhupada's departure; indeed we have expended a great deal of energy in trying to modify and influence these subtly shifting mental distillations. Thus these minutes, by definition, can shed no new light on the issue at hand since they only relate what a group of people thought Srila Prabhupada said or meant, not necessarily what he actually said or meant.

As mentioned previously, the minutes cannot be offered as irrefutable evidence for what Srila Prabhupada intended or stated, since they were neither authored, checked or signed by him, (unlike the July 9th letter). Furthermore, as explained above, they also differ from an official typed report issued at that time on the very clause the whole issue rests on (minute 2 above).

NON-CORROBORATION:

First, we find written corroboration of the taped conversation in the official minutes book of the GBC.

This assertion is totally false since a written statement can only 'corroborate' a taped conversation if the two are the same. As we have already mentioned, the words spoken on the tape are most definitely not the same as what is written in the so-called minutes book. The minutes are merely evidence for what the GBC thought was spoken in the conversation. This we already knew, and have long since disproved.

Since the minutes book would be accepted by any court of law as official evidence of the dealings of the GBC body, there can be no doubt that the said conversation took place and that Srila Prabhupada did in fact state categorically that the disciples whom he would name would accept disciples of their own, who would be his grand disciples after his departure.

The author has made an illogical assumption above. Firstly he states that the minutes are evidence of the 'dealings of the GBC body', and would be accepted as such by any court of law. This is not in dispute. That is why they are called 'GBC minutes' (*assuming the minutes book itself is genuine*). However the author then jumps to asserting that this somehow proves that 'Srila Prabhupada did in fact state categorically that the disciples whom he would name would accept disciples of their own, who would be his grand disciples after his departure'. The author has asserted that anything which is evidence for the 'dealings of the GBC body' is also cast iron evidence for what Srila Prabhupada actually stated. This does not logically follow, nor would it be seen to logically follow in any court of law. Evidence for what the GBC thought occurred in the conversation is not evidence for what Srila Prabhupada actually stated. The two could coincide. But evidence for one is not ipso facto evidence for the other, unless Srila Prabhupada had checked and signed the above minutes, which he most certainly and emphatically did not. Had Srila Prabhupada signed these minutes our position would surely be much less tenable.

TELEPATHIC LINK:

Without such signed documentation, the only way evidence for what the GBC body thought could be used to prove what Srila Prabhupada actually stated, would be if it could be irrefutably demonstrated that there existed an infallible telepathic link between Srila Prabhupada and the thoughts of the GBC at all times. The fact that Srila Prabhupada disbanded the GBC, at one time instructing everyone to ignore them, and that the GBC have themselves admitted to running an unauthorised zonal

acarya system for nearly a decade, might make such a proposition hard to stick in a court of law.

GOING BACK IN TIME:

What makes the above assertion so shaky is not only the omission of minute 2) from the typed version, though this is certainly bad enough, but also the fact that this very notion of appointing gurus had already been completely rejected by the whole GBC in 1985/86. The understanding of the May 28th conversation, as expressed in minute 2) of the GBC minutes book, whereby **'Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future'**, is what formed the philosophical basis of the zonal *acarya* system. Indeed, it was this mistaken 'understanding' that was enshrined subsequently into the GBC resolutions for 1978, just after Srila Prabhupada's physical departure:

16. The GBC will consider each year at Gour Poornima the APPOINTMENT of new spiritual masters to be approved by a 3/4 vote. However, for 1978, no new spiritual masters shall be APPOINTED, other than the 11 SELECTED by Srila Prabhupada. (GBC resolutions, March 19, 1978, 9.30 am)

As we mentioned at the beginning, the author is dredging up evidence which only supports the old zonal *acarya* system, and which has itself been completely rejected and disbanded many years ago. Thus, in a nutshell, the author offers a previously discarded '*understanding*' of the May 28th conversation as evidence in support of the current ISKCON guru system, that was itself set up to **REPLACE** the old **WRONG** system that was founded on this very same '*understanding*'!?!

Perhaps if we were all to put our watches and clocks back twenty years to the time when everyone blindly accepted the 'guru appointment' theory we might better understand the author's mind-set. Certainly the author was never more 'fired-up' as when he was actively and unquestioningly promoting a system everyone now accepts was completely unauthorised non-sense.

Whatever the author's current mind-set we are certainly not prepared to even contemplate modifying Srila Prabhupada's signed *Final Order* on initiations on the basis of an already discredited and uncorroborated '*understanding*' of what Srila Prabhupada supposedly said on May 28th 1977. We have given a carefully considered analysis of what we think actually transpired on pages 21-26 of '*The Final Order*'. If the author rejects our analysis we humbly suggest he offers a point for point rebuttal. This may be difficult for him, but not as challenging as building a time machine and transporting us all back to the glory days of the zonal *acarya*'s.

We should next note that the letter of July 9th, 1977 refers directly to this GBC meeting in its opening paragraph:

If it is indeed the case that the July 9th letter is specifically referring back to the May 28th conversation, and not some other discussion, then the very fact that the letter does not advise the reader to listen to that conversation tape, or read a transcript of it, would clearly indicate that Srila Prabhupada considered the July 9th letter an accurate and complete summary of the conversation. It makes no sense whatsoever to say that a letter relating directly to such a momentous conversation, and which begins by promising to impart the very conclusion of that discussion, would then go on to omit the two most important points, namely **modifications A & B**. (We already covered this point in detail in '*The Final Order*' pages 9, page 22, page 25 etc.)

This opening statement establishes without a doubt that the appointment of the 11 *ritviks* stood within the context of the previously established desire of His Divine Grace on May 28 that his disciples would accept disciples of their own after his departure.

Above the author has merely assumed the very thing that needs to be proven viz., that on May 28th Srila Prabhupada expressed a desire that **'his disciples would accept disciples of their own after his departure'**. The author repeats this assumption again later:

On May 28th Srila Prabhupada established that after his departure, the men he would name would become gurus in their own right, with disciples of their own who would be his grand disciples.

The only evidence the author has offered in support of his assumption is the GBC's scribblings in their minutes book, which everyone now agrees was the wrong understanding anyway.

The author then goes on to give his speculation as to what the July 9th letter really meant:

This remaining question was thus resolved in the conversation Tamal Krishna Goswami had with His Divine Grace on July 7th, which was translated into the letter of July 9th. When we take the correct context it is clear that the conversation and letter was addressing the problem of the continuance of initiations while Srila Prabhupada was still present, with the understanding of what would happen after his disappearance having already been clearly established.

Please note that in the passage above the author is stating that the 'context' for the July 9th letter was the July 7th conversation, addressing only the problem of the 'continuance of initiations while Srila Prabhupada was still present'. However just a few lines earlier the author had stated:

This opening statement establishes without a doubt that the appointment of the 11 *ritviks* stood within the context of the previously established desire of His Divine Grace on May 28 that his disciples would accept disciples of their own after his departure.

Above the author states that the 'context' of the July 9th letter was the matter of initiations for when Srila Prabhupada was not present. Thus the author has clearly contradicted himself. And this is only to be expected, for, as we pointed out in our replies to other GBC papers:

How can a conversation held on May 28th, that the GBC claims deals only with what to do after Srila Prabhupada leaves the planet, making no reference to proxies, be legitimately used to modify a letter that the GBC claims deals only with proxies, and only with what was to be done before Srila Prabhupada left?

The author has tried to solve this conundrum by stating that the context for the July 9th letter is simultaneously what should be done whilst Srila Prabhupada is present, and what should be done when he is not present! Anyone can see this is an absurd position to take, and certainly impossible to defend.

The author then astonishingly goes on to state that:

It does not require anything other a simple, straightforward reading of these conversations to understand this.

We would be very interested to know which '*straightforward*' reading of which '*conversation*' leads to the conclusion that the 11 *ritviks* named on July 9th were to magically metamorphose into 11 fully-fledged *Diksa* Gurus the very second Srila Prabhupada left his body. Please show us these clear words and sentences explicitly stating that the M.A.S.S., was to occur immediately on Srila Prabhupada's departure. The only words the author has given us in his paper are those jotted down by an inefficient GBC secretary who caused the GBC to wrongly conclude that Srila Prabhupada had '**appointed**' 11 zonal *diksa* gurus. This terrible mistake drove away countless sincere souls and took nearly an entire decade to 'rectify'. We wonder if the author has ever fully confronted the role he himself played in that ghastly fiasco.

The author ends his paper in a consistent manner, namely by making an assertion that is the very opposite of reality:

All of this has already been stated in the GBC paper "Disciple of My Disciple" by Badrinarayan dasa, Giridhari Swami and Umapati Swami but in that paper the exact recorded resolutions were not included.

If the author had taken the trouble to read '*The Final Order Still Stands*', our reply to '*Disciple of My Disciple*' (abbreviated to DD), he would have seen that DD actually double contradicts the GBC minutes book. Perhaps this was the reason they wisely omitted these 'exact recorded resolutions':

"The present paper will show that on May 28th, 1977, Srila Prabhupada ordered his disciples to become initiating spiritual masters."

(DD, P2)

When Srila Prabhupada says, "on my behalf, on my order ...," the proxy-initiation adherents say that he is speaking of an order to come in the future ..."

(DD, p8)

"The words "on My order" themselves point to the order."

(DD, p8) (This refers to line 12 (as given in "*The Final Order*") of the Appt Tape)

"There is no appointment of gurus or successors, only a recommendation that certain disciples start the natural process."

(DD, p4)

Please note that in DD, the GBC clearly state that the order for guru-ship was made on May 28th itself, and that NO APPOINTMENT took place. The GBC minutes book states that on May 28th only the FUTURE establishment of guru-ship was mentioned, and further, that guru-ship was to be brought about by an APPOINTMENT:

"Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiations in the future, even after his departure."

(GBC minutes book)

Thus we have a clear contradiction between the author and the very body he is supposedly defending. And this on the most fundamental issue of how Srila Prabhupada supposedly authorised his disciples to initiate after his physical departure. It is clear the GBC and their supporters are in complete confusion and disarray over this whole matter. We suggest it would be much simpler for everyone if we all just accept the July 9th order as Srila Prabhupada's final word on the issue. Who could possibly object to that?

SUMMARY:

This has to be the most pitiable attempt so far at providing evidence in support of **modifications A & B** as given in the '*Final Order*'. The author has been forced to put forward the GBC's original misunderstanding that led to the establishment of a guru system which everyone had rejected as bogus over 10 years ago. If the GBC and their sympathisers have no evidence it would be far more dignified to just admit the fact. It really will not help them to just present previously discredited speculations.

The author has also added in, for good measure, the usual mixture of contradictions, misrepresentations, and unsupported speculations which IRM readers will know are par for the course with all GBC inspired attacks on '*The Final Order*'.

Maybe this sad attempt to re-present previously discarded evidence is a sign that the GBC and its apologists have finally run out of steam. Certainly they must be desperate if they think devotees are willing to go back in time to the old '*guru appointment*' mythology of twenty years ago.

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