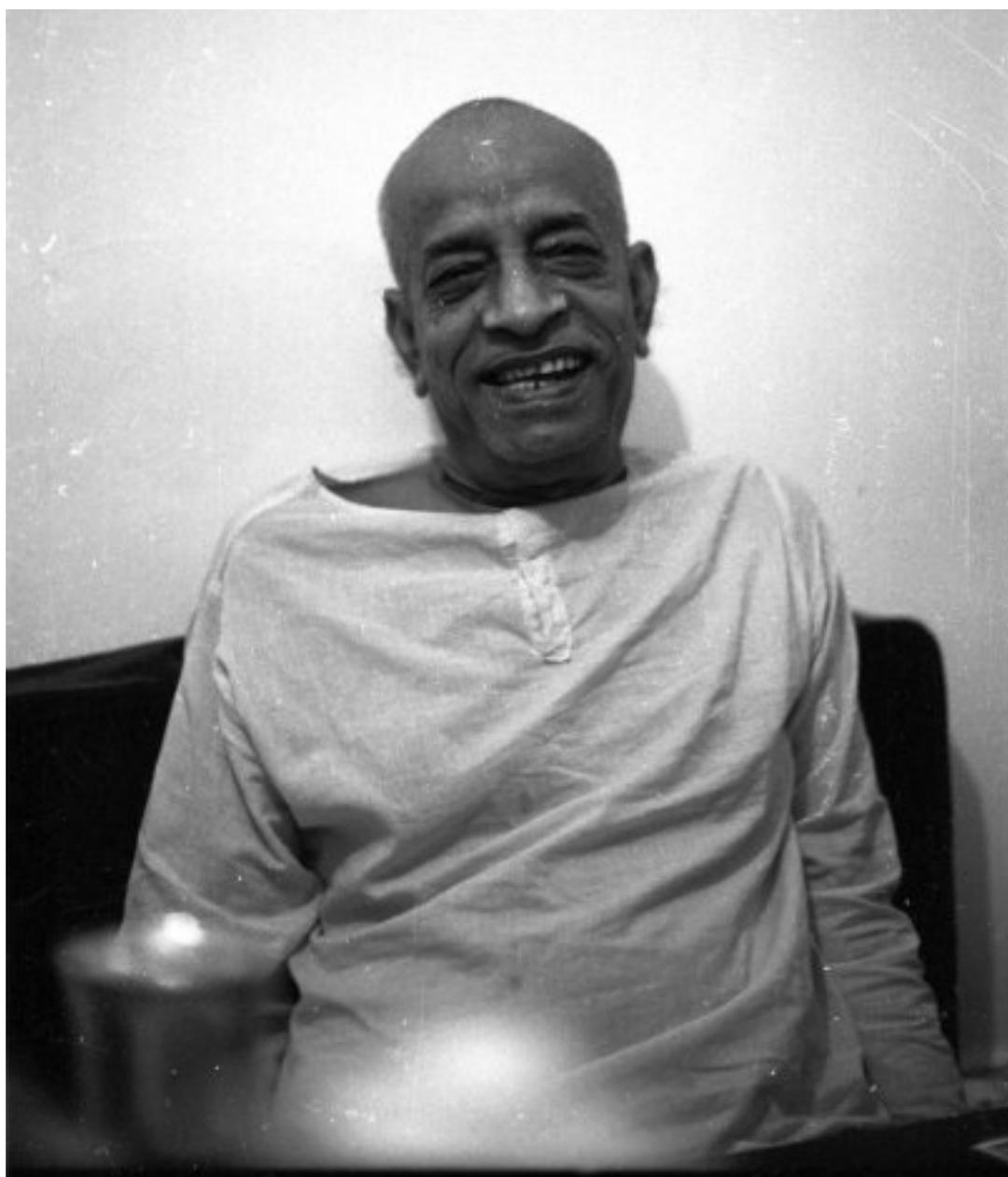


a response to: 'Badri's Bombay Proposals'

The Fallacy of Guru Reform



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(C.c. Madhya, 4.111, purport)



by Krishnakant

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A Response to the 'Badri's Bombay Proposals'

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Currently efforts are underway to 'reform' ISKCON's current Guru system for the 3rd time in just 20 years. Each reform has had the following in common:

1. They have been the knee-jerk reaction to some guru fall-down;
2. They have attempted to reduce the power and status of the *diksa* gurus that replaced Srila Prabhupada.
3. They have attempted to make the position and status of Srila Prabhupada more prominent.

The irony of these attempts at reform, especially the most recent '*Bombay proposals*', is that they are also designed to stem the rapid interest in the '*ritvik*' system that is currently sweeping the society. We say ironic since the aim of the reforms is to simply move towards what the *ritvik* system actually achieves i.e. to make *Srila Prabhupada Prominent* and the status of those who perform the actual initiation ceremony less prominent. In the *ritvik* system Srila Prabhupada's position is completely prominent, whilst those who conduct the ceremony have a completely minimal status. Thus these reforms simply legitimise the *ritvik* aspirations, whilst at the same time hoping to satisfy them by picking arbitrary levels for both Srila Prabhupada's prominence and the minimisation of the *diksa* guru.

To justify the reforms 3 '*scenarios*' have been presented:

1. '*Acarya*' Guru System: Status of *Diksa* Guru - Maximum; **Srila Prabhupada's Status - Less Prominent;**
2. '*Bombay Proposals*': Status of *Diksa* Guru - De-emphasised; **Srila Prabhupada's Status - More Prominent;**
3. '*Ritvik*' System: Status of 'Initiator' - Minimal; **Srila Prabhupada's Status - Maximum;**

Thus the '*Bombay proposals*' are pitched as being a happy '*medium*' mitigating the extremities of the other two systems. Further the '*Ritvik*' scenario is presented as being the '*deviant*' one since the other two scenarios both at least accept the '*param-para*' principle, but differ only in application.

Philosophically and in relationship to Srila Prabhupada's teachings however there are actually only **TWO** scenarios, for scenarios 1 and 3 above are actually the same since they both accept that the role of the *diksa* guru in the life of the disciple as absolute. In fact scenarios 1 and 3 are identical with only the identity of the *diksa* guru changed. Since the '*ritvik*' system is not a different 'guru' system but merely a system that keeps Srila Prabhupada as the *diksa* guru.

Indeed in relationship to Srila Prabhupada's teachings it is actually the '*Bombay proposals*' which are '*deviant*'. Both from Srila Prabhupada's own personal example and the teachings in Srila Prabhupada's books, only **ONE** type of *diksa* guru-disciple relationship is presented, and that is where the role of the *diksa* guru is supreme and prominent, minimised: **NOT**

"In other words, the spiritual master awakens the sleeping living entity to his original consciousness so that he can worship Lord Visnu. This is the purpose of *diksa*, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness."

(C.c. Madhya, 9.61, purport)

"*Diksa* actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination."

(C.c. Madhya, 4.111, purport)

"*Diksa* is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of the revealed scriptures knows this process as *diksa*."

(C.c. Madhya, 15.108, purport)

It is the spiritual master who delivers the disciple from the clutches of maya by initiating him into the chanting of the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*.[...] This is the purpose of *Diksa* or initiation.

(CC, Madhya, 9:61)

This *bhakti-lata-bija* is received when one is initiated by a Bona-Fide Spiritual Master.

(CC, Madhya 19.152)

This is the process of initiation. The disciple must admit that he will no longer commit sinful activity [...] He promises to execute the order of the spiritual master. Then, the Spiritual Master takes care of him and elevates him to spiritual emancipation.

(CC, Madhya, 24.256)

Say somebody:

1. Awakens us to our original consciousness so we can worship the Lord.
2. Plants the *Bhakti Lata Bija*
3. Gives us the pure knowledge of Krsna consciousness.
4. Gives us the transcendental knowledge by which we can be free from ALL material contamination.
5. Vanquishes ALL the reactions caused by sinful activity.
6. Delivers us from the clutches of *maya*.
7. Takes care of us and elevates us to spiritual emancipation.

This is exactly the role that Srila Prabhupada played. It is also the role that 'scenario' 1 tries to imitate, and scenario 3 CONTINUES.

The 'Bombay Proposals':

1. "For all generations of ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada is the pre-eminent and perpetual link to the *Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya sampradaya*.
2. He and he alone shall perpetually occupy the Seat at the head of ISKCON as the sole *Acharya*.
3. As long as ISKCON lasts as a preaching mission under Srila Prabhupada's order, Srila Prabhupada is present in the world and remains the manifest link to the *parampara*."

The above 3 resolutions merely restate the current accurate position:

All links in the *parampara* are perpetual and manifest. (Otherwise they would not be there permanently, in which case they are not in the *parampara* eternally, in which case they were never in the *parampara* to begin with). The issue has always been the **POSITION** of Srila Prabhupada in the *parampara* - is he the current link or not. The above resolutions do not address this point and thus add absolutely nothing to the 'reform' process. They merely re-state completely obvious points.

4. "Any initiated devotee in ISKCON who is sincerely following the teachings of Srila Prabhupada should be understood and respected as having a relationship with His Divine Grace as a direct and indirect disciple."

This is a complete concoction. Srila Prabhupada has never even **MENTIONED** the term '*Indirect disciple*'.

4.1 "A direct relationship with Srila Prabhupada is established whenever an aspirant develops faith (*sraddha*) by coming into contact with the Krsna consciousness Movement. That aspirant thereby directly connects with Srila Prabhupada via one or both, of his currently manifested forms: His *vani*, which is his books and writings, and his *vapu*, or functional body, which is ISKCON and its members."

This again simply states the obvious - that when one contacts Srila Prabhupada's *vani* or *vapu* directly, one contacts Srila Prabhupada directly.

4.2 "As the spiritual life of the candidate develops, he becomes further and further incorporated into the body of ISKCON. An essential element in this process is the acceptance of a *diksa* guru. This acceptance is enjoined by Srila Prabhupada and by *sastra* as essential for further spiritual development. This *diksa* strengthens, enriches, and enlarges the direct connection with Srila Prabhupada."

The same *sastra* nowhere states that Srila Prabhupada's role as the *diksa* guru of ISKCON must end once he disappeared.

4.3 "So inviolable is this connection with Srila Prabhupada that, as long as the devotee keeps faith with Srila Prabhupada, his relationship remains undiminished even if his own *diksa* guru should deviate."

Again this is another concoction. Srila Prabhupada states that the link to the *parampara* never deviates:

“One is therefore advised to study *Bhagavad-gita*, or any other scripture, under a bona fide spiritual master, with service and surrender. A bona fide spiritual master is in the disciplic succession from time eternal, and he does not deviate at all from the instructions of the Supreme Lord as they were imparted millions of years ago to the sun-god, from whom the instructions of *Bhagavad-gita* have come down to the earthly kingdom.”

(Bg, 4:42, purport)

Thus by promoting a system whereby the relationship with Srila Prabhupada remains even if the devotee who conducts the initiation ceremony falls away, Badri prabhu is merely promoting a system that in substance is no different to the *ritvik* system.

1. “Initiating gurus in ISKCON are servants of Srila Prabhupada; the duty of these servants is to insure that the master is more prominent than himself.”

Again this simply states the obvious.

2. “Deliverance of the disciple is done by three agents working in concert; Srila Prabhupada himself, ISKCON (Srila Prabhupada’s functional body with its various members), and the individual servants who personally care for the disciples (the initiating guru, the temple president, and other guides and teachers). Thus it is Srila Prabhupada who delivers the disciple, acting by himself and through his books, his society, and his devotees.

In answer to the question “Who delivers the disciple?” the answer is “Srila Prabhupad, via his books, his society, and his devotees.”

Here we see that Badri prabhu has merely stated exactly the same philosophy on *guru tattva* that we have now - that Srila Prabhupada delivers **VIA** his devotees - one of whom is the *diksa* guru. Thus Srila Prabhupada is **NOT** the current link, but the current *diksa* guru is. So we see that when it comes to the real issue of the philosophy, Srila Prabhupada’s position is made no more prominent than it is now.

“Rather than designing a system which accepts a lower level of Krsna consciousness as the status quo (as the *rtvik* system does), we are proposing a system which pushes ISKCON’s members to a higher standard. The following points outline steps towards this goal and top priority should be given to their immediate development and implementation.”

This of course is a blatant lie. The *ritvik* system does not stop people progressing in Krsna consciousness. It merely inhibits people’s desire to replace Srila Prabhupada as the guru for ISKCON. On the contrary Badri’s system totally lowers the standards for Gurus, by accepting that they do not need to be liberated, and that they need to be controlled, trained and monitored. Thus it simply encourages any regular devotee who fulfils the most basic requirements of being an initiated disciple, to aspire to take up the post of guru.

The Bombay proposals continue in this vein with more speculative and arbitrary rules that can be used to control, monitor and ‘review’ the gurus.

Of course the most telling point in this whole discussion regarding guru ‘reform’ is that everyone **HAS** to speculate as to exactly what the standard should be -

- Do they have *vyasasana* or not?
- If so what should be their size and where should they be placed?
- Do they have honorific titles or not?
- If so how should they be used?
- Should they have *Vyasa-puja* celebrations?
- If so how lavish should they be?

ETC. ETC.

The very fact that Srila Prabhupada has given **NO** direction on this issue at all, is itself evidence that he had no desire to operate a successor guru system to replace him.

- Otherwise why are there no instructions on this subject in his books?
- Are we supposed to figure it out by speculating, like we are doing now?
- Or do we ask the devotees what they would like, like we are doing now?
- Or do we just invite everyone and anyone to give their proposals and see what flies, like we are doing now?
- Or do we ask other *sampradayas*, and go outside Srila Prabhupada’s teachings, like we are doing now?

- Or are we supposed to consult members of the Gaudiya Matha like we did originally?

The reason we have got into such a mess trying to operate a *diksa* guru system in ISKCON is because we have just made it up as we went along. The only *diksa* guru system we learned from Srila Prabhupada is the one he himself practised with his disciples, and yet this is the **ONE** system the GBC are all agreed on they will **NOT** introduce, **EITHER** with Srila Prabhupada **OR** his disciples as the *diksa* guru.

The main point the GBC are completely missing - that they have to continually invent what to do in regards to a guru system because Srila Prabhupada did not give any instructions regarding one, since he did not want one. There was no need for Srila Prabhupada to describe what was already going on - only to ask that it continues. If a major **CHANGE** to what was occurring was to happen, it is **THAT** which would need to be described.

We are expected to believe that Srila Prabhupada wanted to set up a whole guru system in ISKCON without giving any instructions as to **HOW** it would happen, or **HOW** it would be practised etc. Rather just from one phrase spoken in a room conversation to a few devotees (May 28th), we are supposed to construct everything. This is why immediately they had to go to Sridhara Maharaja to figure out what should be done. Subsequently we have simply tried to make adjustments to the guru system that will be appealing to the devotees, but no reference is made at any time to Srila Prabhupada's instructions.

The irony is that the above argument about a lack of detailed instructions is used in reverse regarding the *ritvik* system - that how would Srila Prabhupada set up something completely new and foreign etc. without giving elaborate instructions regarding such a system etc. But that is the whole point. Srila Prabhupada is not setting up anything new - he is simply keeping everything the same. In such a scenario Srila Prabhupada would simply need to give a letter to the whole movement stating a mechanism for how the initiation ceremonies could continue to be conducted without his direct involvement - (since every other aspect of the guru-disciple relationship did not require Srila Prabhupada's physical presence as had been demonstrated practically for many years by the way the movement was run when Srila Prabhupada was here - with the majority of Srila Prabhupada's disciples having no physical interaction with him.) And guess what - that is exactly what Srila Prabhupada did on July 9th.

Conclusion

1. The Bombay proposals are a complete speculation from start to finish. There is no support at all from them in Srila Prabhupada's teachings. The very fact that they need to look to other *sampradayas* or the past for evidence merely highlights the fact that they have no support for this idea of '*guru reform*' in Srila Prabhupada's teachings.
2. The proposals are very cleverly designed to appease those clamouring for change by downgrading the external privileges of the *diksa* guru. But by keeping the **PHILOSOPHY** the same as it is now, it provides the elasticity for the Gurus to grow back again in stature when the climate is more favourable. This is exactly what happened in 1986. At that time many restrictions were imposed and a new dawn was supposedly ushered in. 12 years on and many fall-downs later, we have seen that the weed to replace Srila Prabhupada has simply grown. The same will happen with this system. And when that happens we will have more '*guru reform*'. It should be obvious that one needs to cure the disease not simply treat the symptoms by simply chopping and changing and shuffling the way gurus behave and operate. The disease of course is the deviation from Srila Prabhupada's order to keep him as the *diksa* guru, and us simply as assistants. These reforms implicitly recognise this point since the aim is to dilute the status of the *diksa* gurus and make Srila Prabhupada more prominent. The obvious question on many devotees' mind is that instead of arbitrarily choosing how much prominence to give to Srila Prabhupada in relation to the *diksa* gurus, why not just go all the way, as per Srila Prabhupada's July 9th directive?
3. Unlike the Bombay proposals which are simply the latest knee-jerk speculative response to the latest '*guru crisis*', the *ritvik* option is a consistent unchanging alternative based directly on Srila Prabhupada's instructions.
4. The Bombay proposals are of course one of many '*reform proposals*' now doing the rounds - The Radhadesh proposals, the Malaysia proposals etc. Now everyone is clamouring to give a speculative and arbitrary level of '*reforms*' to '*fix*' the guru problems. The solution however is not to ask everyone what they would like, but to base the change solely on Srila Prabhupada's instructions. This however is not a path the GBC wish to take since then the GBC will either end up with the *ritvik* idea **OR** a bunch of contradictory interpretations regarding the '*Appt Tape*' and other evidence. This has been conclusively demonstrated by the **TWO** failed attempts by the GBC to answer the '*Final Order*' - Please see the papers the '*Final Order Still Stands*' and the '*GBC Fail to Answer the Final Order*'.
5. This whole problem has arose because Srila Prabhupada has not given **ANY** instructions at all as to how a guru system would be established and function in ISKCON. (We have also demonstrated that neither did Srila Prabhupada state that there should BE any *diksa* gurus in ISKCON - but we will stick to the point in hand since this is not disputed). This is because no such system was to be set up in ISKCON. Consequently we are now left in the embarrassing situation of speculating amongst ourselves just exactly how prominent the gurus should be. Further such speculative and arbitrary reforms will continue perpetually since there are no instructions from Srila Prabhupada for any sort of *diksa* guru system in ISKCON.

The only solution is to keep in place the system Srila Prabhupada personally set up and practised for all the time he was here, and which he told us to continue - with him as the *diksa* guru.

The Final Order - The Final Solution

OR

More Speculation - More Guru Reform

The Choice is yours.

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