

# The twists and turns of His Holiness Sivarama

We start this article with a series of published statements from an ISKCON devotee:

## Statement 1:

*"For almost five years I had seen and known Prabhupada visually from photos [...] But I had never seen Prabhupada in person [...] Then I understood that the spiritual master is non different than his picture."*

## Statement 2:

*"Srila Prabhupada was a transparent media. He transmitted complete and perfect knowledge with no personal slant. I accepted the information I was receiving from the book as perfect and yet could not recognise its author as my eternal spiritual guide."*

## Statement 3:

*"Srila Prabhupada was everything. He was the spiritual master, visionary acarya, empowered preacher, head pujari, expert cook, father, friend, and only via media to Krsna."*

From these statements, we learn that:

- 1) Srila Prabhupada is present in his pictures.
- 2) Srila Prabhupada communicates through his books as the transparent via media to Krishna. He is therefore our eternal spiritual guide and spiritual master.
- 3) Srila Prabhupada, the topmost empowered *acarya* (spiritual master), is the only via media to Krishna.

You could be forgiven for thinking that these statements emanated from an IRM supporter or from the BTP editorial office. Indeed, we would be happy to endorse them. But you would be wrong. They are in fact the statements of HH Sivarama Swami (henceforward 'SRS'), an ISKCON GBC-elected guru, published in an article he wrote called *Meeting Srila Prabhupada*. In the same article, we learn that though SRS had not even met Srila Prabhupada at

the time, he was already initiated as his disciple:

**"That was the first personal contact with his Divine Grace, although I had been an initiated devotee for two years."** (SRS, *Meeting Srila Prabhupada*)

Yet for anyone today who accepts Srila Prabhupada as their "eternal spiritual guide", "spiritual master" and "only via media to Krsna" – in the same way that SRS did i.e. if you agree with the IRM – then we have some bad news for you as the following letter reveals:

**"It is the desire of the local ISKCON, UK Charity Board of Directors, chaired by His Holiness Sivarama Swami [...] to ban all persons who advocate, assist, organise or help finance posthumous *ritvik* theories from coming to Bhaktivedanta Manor."** (Letter issued by ex-guru and Temple President Vipramukhya Swami).

("Posthumous *ritvik* theories" is a rather distasteful term to describe the belief that Srila Prabhupada is not accessible because he is "dead"). Thus, while on the one hand SRS in his statements above advocates the SAME philosophy as the IRM for himself, on the other hand he enforces a ban on any devotees from visiting Bhaktivedanta Manor should they believe in this philosophy! For the *process* described by SRS is completely independent of Srila Prabhupada's physical presence. If SRS can be inspired and initiated by Srila Prabhupada without having even seen him, then so can anyone else on the planet.

Unfortunately, by his other writings and actions, SRS has demonstrated over the years a remarkably bipolar attitude towards Srila Prabhupada's philosophy, as we now illustrate.

## 1989: Guru hoax successor

In the 1980s, SRS was the right hand man of one of the orig-

inal 11 guru hoaxers, Bhagavan Das Goswami, fanatically promoting him as a "pure devotee" and "guru successor" to Srila Prabhupada. Yet Bhagavan, along with the other 10 guru imposters, was only ever authorised by Srila Prabhupada in his institutional directive of July 9th 1977 to act as a *ritvik* priest, not as a guru. Bhagavan was later disgraced after being caught engaging in illicit activity and was removed as an "initiating guru".

SRS had no hesitation in immediately filling Bhagavan's shoes as his successor as a GBC-elected guru.

## 1994: 'Srila Prabhupada no longer the current link'

In 1994, SRS published a booklet entitled *Continuing the Parampara* (CTP) which was an attempt to defeat the *ritvik* philosophy, arguing that Srila Prabhupada was no longer the current link in our disciplic succession. Below we will demonstrate SRS's muddled understanding, by showing how he contradicts both his fellow GBC-elected gurus and Srila Prabhupada himself.

## SRS contradicts ISKCON GBC-elected guru Jayadvaita Swami

"My proposal, which I shall show in the following section is that **Srila Prabhupada** did complete the training, at least to his satisfaction, and **did choose some gurus.**"

(Sivarama Swami, CTP 1994, emphasis added)

**"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."**

(Jayadvaita Swami - San Diego Debate 1990)

## SRS contradicts official ISKCON GBC publication

"As a final point we would like to give a new definition to the word *ritvik* or *ritvik acarya* [...] I would propose that any guru, is an officiating *acarya* or *ritvik acarya*. That is because he is acting on behalf of his guru. Like all devotees do. That does not mean that the disciples are his guru's but as a Vaisnava he does it on the guru's behalf."

(Sivarama Swami, CTP, p.21)

"The word *ritvik* literally means a priest who performs a sacrifice."

(Bhakti Caru Swami, ISKCON Journal March 1990 p. 13.)

"Fire sacrifice, beads, name – then goodbye! Prabhupada authorised it. He's my guru. This other guy is just performing a ceremony! And that's the actual position of the *ritvik*. He's just an officiating priest."

(Satyaraja Das - ISKCON Journal, March 1990, p. 38)

Furthermore, SRS not only gives a whole new definition of meaning to the word '*ritvik*', but then has the audacity to state:

"Like the word Hindu, the word *rtvik* has entered with one meaning, but is being given another meaning altogether."

(Sivarama Swami, CTP, p.31)

*A clearer case of Orwellian doublethink it would be hard to find!*

## SRS contradicts Srila Prabhupada

"In this regards Srila Prabhupada clearly states that a devotee other than an *uttama adhikari* (pure devotee on the topmost platform of God-realisation) can initiate."

(Sivarama Swami, CTP, p.29)



# Swami: A case study

“One should not become a Spiritual Master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikari* [...]Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an *uttama-adhikari* as a Spiritual Master.”

(*Nectar of Instruction*, Text 5, purport)

“On the whole, you may know that he is not a liberated person, and therefore, he cannot initiate any person to Krsna Consciousness.”

(*Srila Prabhupada Letter*, April 18th, 1968)

## 1994: Srila Prabhupada acts as current link

“What are these books that changed my family so much. How is it possible that he can speak so powerfully through them? You must feel very fortunate to be his disciple. How great a man he is! Sometimes when my Granny chants in front of a picture of Krishna she cries. How does Prabhupada do that? I want to cry like that too. Granny dreams of Prabhupada and sometimes she talks to his picture. Although it says on the cover of the book that he passed away, is Prabhupada really dead, or is he still alive? Do you think I can meet him some day?”

This letter, written by a young girl about Srila Prabhupada’s books, formed part of SRS’s *Vyasa Puja* offering to Srila Prabhupada in 1994. The letter clearly demonstrates the potency of Srila Prabhupada’s books in communicating directly with any sincere soul. In his offering, SRS states:

“This is one letter, from one girl who came in contact with you. How many millions of such souls are there who have yet to write, who are directly experiencing your mercy daily, who read your books with implicit faith, whom you talk to in dreams and pictures, whose lives you change abruptly and reward with tears when chanting the holy

names? [...]I think these people are meeting you every day.” (SRS, *Vyasa Puja* offering, 1994)

So in the SAME YEAR as publishing a document stating that Srila Prabhupada can no longer accept disciples, SRS at the same time admits that it is Srila Prabhupada who is personally meeting people every day through his books and making them his followers! Such philosophical bipolarity continues today, with SRS still insisting that Srila Prabhupada is not accessible as one’s Guru, but rather one must surrender to either himself or one of the other 80 “ISKCON gurus” in order to receive Srila Prabhupada’s mercy.

## 1995: “Gopi Bhava” deviation – part 1

SRS was one of the members of the infamous “Gopi Bhava” club, which included ISKCON luminaries such as Tamala Krishna Goswami, and which for many years in the early to mid-1990s went to seek “higher guidance” from HH Narayana Maharaja of the Gaudiya Math, on the topics of “*rasika*” and “*Gopi bhava*” (confidential pastimes of Krishna and His maidservants). In response to this activity, even the GBC passed the following resolution:

“The recent proliferation in ISKCON of literature focusing on “*rasika-bhakti*,” intimate *Radha-Krsna lila*, and other subject matters suitable only for highly advanced souls, represents a departure from Srila Prabhupada’s orders and obstructs the smooth spiritual progress of ISKCON devotees. ISKCON members should therefore avoid collecting, reading, discussing, or distributing such literature.”

(Resolution 73, GBC Resolutions 1995)

SRS and company were also

banned temporarily from initiating and visiting Vrindavana as a punishment!

## 2003: “Gopi Bhava” deviation – part 2

Obviously not taking the GBC’s Resolution on “the recent proliferation in ISKCON of literature focusing on “*rasika-bhakti*,” intimate *Radha-Krsna lila*” very seriously, SRS then proceeded to write a book all about – “intimate *Radha-Krsna lila*”! Furthermore, SRS even admits that his book *Na Paraye ‘ham* is a work of fiction:

“The first poetic license, therefore, was to induce the fictional characters Syamalata and Nava-sakhi. As a consequence of this decision, these literary characters interact with real historical persons such as Radha and Krsna”

(*Sivarama Swami, Na paraye ‘ham*, p.19)

Such a practise of imagining the pastimes of the Supreme Lord is condemned by Srila Prabhupada:

“One who follows his imaginations about the Supreme Personality of Godhead is condemned.”

(*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 10.3.32, purport)

## 2004: SRS admits GBC “lies”

In 1996, the IRM submitted its foundational paper *The Final Order* (TFO) to a select committee of the GBC. The paper was a specific deconstruction of the GBC’s paper *On My Order Understood* which formed the backbone to the GBC’s “*guru tattva*” philosophy. Supporters of TFO were subsequently banned from ISKCON temples.

In 2004, SRS admitted the GBC’s folly by stating that *On My Order Understood* is a pack of “lies”, and proposed a resolution



HH Sivarama Swami

for it to be withdrawn – which it was that year. TFO is now published as a book free of charge – please see back page.

## 2004: SRS brands ISKCON guru a “sick liar”

In the same year, seemingly on some sort of crusade against liars, SRS was unhappy about fellow guru Jayapataka Swami’s frenzied ambitions to acquire disciples, calling him “a sick person” who is “obsessed”, and added for good measure that Jayapataka’s obsession “makes lying or duplicitous behaviour fully reconcilable with service to Prabhupada.”

## Conclusion

In the Introduction to *Continuing the Parampara*, it is stated: “The proper way to understand these important issues is by open discussion amongst Vaishnavas.” Yet it is SRS himself who is overseeing the banning of devotees from the temple for putting forward Srila Prabhupada’s instructions on *ritvik* – hardly “open discussion”.

We do, however, completely concur with SRS when he writes:

“I have reconciled that the search for Srila Prabhupada is within his instructions, his books and within my heart. Gradually I am learning to appreciate that it is *vani* (Guru’s teachings) which is the eternal link that I am being forced to embrace” (SRS, *Meeting Srila Prabhupada*)

**WELCOME TO THE IRM.**