

Introduction: Defining the role of all preachers, men or women in ISKCON

1. The aim of our presentation on behalf of the Guru Services Committee is not to take an absolute position on either side of the issues. But to focus on the way forward. There are two parts to this presentation.
2. There have been challenges for many devotees taking up the service of a diksa guru within ISKCON. This presentation is to point out possible reasons behind these challenges and suggests ways to protect those who take up the service. Some suggestions about Vaisnava diksa gurus is also made in the 2nd half of the presentation.
3. Normally a diksa guru is chosen from the class of uttama adhikari, mahabhagata devotees. (1)
4. “Not so many” women became diksa gurus because not as many women as men came to the highest platform (mahabhagata)
5. An uttama-adhikari devotee is at least on the bhava platform of devotional realization. (2)
6. A mahabhagavata Vaisnava can be recognized by his:
 - a. Has assimilated all the knowledge in the Bhagavad-gita and other scriptures.
 - b. He is situated in his eternal spiritual body and has realized his eternal rasa with Lord Krishna.
 - c. He has realized that there is no difference between Lord Krishna and His name.
 - d. He is 100% dedicated to spreading Krishna consciousness.(NOI 5 purport)
7. When there is a need and a mahabhagavata devotee is not present, less qualified devotees can act as guru and acharya by strictly following the disciplic succession. (1) (3)
8. Such a devotee may not be on the platform of bhava or prema but is a liberated person ready to begin actual pure devotional service—Bhagavad-gita 18.54 (4)
9. When mahabhagavatas or liberated devotees are not present, others who are on lower platform of spiritual advancement can give initiations under certain circumstances. (5)
10. A neophyte Vaisnava or a Vaisnava 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. (NoI purport verse 5)
11. Only a mahabhagavata could have independent control over his disciples and ISKCON’s resources and use them completely effectively without danger. But in ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada indicated that the GBC will be the ultimate authority and would have to delegate such authority if its members thought that some devotee is a mahabhagavata. However, one who imitates a mahabhagavata will “eventually become degraded” (6)
12. Srila Prabhupada gave management of ISKCON’s resources, members and other, to those he designated as ISKCON’s managers (7)
13. The role of a diksa guru in ISKCON is to work under the authority structure that Srila Prabhupada established and teach his disciples to do the same. All resources he acquires by his service as a diksa guru belong to ISKCON. His disciples’ practical service should be directed by the authorities that Srila Prabhupada appointed to manage ISKCON.
14. Instructions and initiation should always take into account maryada-vyatikrama: impertinently surpassing a greater personality. For example, Uddhava instructed

Vidura to instead take instruction from Maitreya Rsi, who was elder to Uddhava, was nearby and about the same age as Vidura. (8)

15. ISKCON authorities should not become asara by duplicating the failed example of the Gaudiya Matha by improperly delegating their responsibilities and resources. (9)
16. The managers of ISKCON, in consultation with other senior devotees, have to take full responsibility for the maintenance and development of ISKCON according to the purposes as given by Srila Prabhupada. (10)
17. Srila Prabhupada in The Nectar of Instruction talks about how the six loving exchanges should be taught by the diksa guru to his disciples that Srila Rupa Goswami mentions in verse number 4. Srila Prabhupada mentions that devotees should be trained to recognize which devotees are superior, equal or less mature in devotional service. The disciples should be taught how to serve, appreciate and express their love appropriately to the different levels of devotees.
18. When the siksa gurus see that the diksa gurus are training their disciples in the appropriate exchanges of love with the different levels of devotees, the siksa gurus faith in the diksa guru will increase and the siksa gurus will encourage their disciples to serve the diksa guru more faithfully. When the diksa gurus see that the siksa gurus are training their disciples to serve and have faith in their diksa guru, the diksa guru will also encourage their disciples to serve and have faith in their siksa gurus. Thus there will develop a society of love and faith in Krishna consciousness, which is the success of Srila Prabhupada's institution and teachings.
19. All devotees in ISKCON whether their responsibilities work under the shelter and guidance of a mahabhagavata Srila Prabhupada who is present in ISKCON in his instructions, example, murti, remembrance and those who are following him.
20. Conclusion: If the role, responsibilities and assets of the diksa and siksa gurus are established according to Srila Prabhupada's instructions, and with the proper establishment of spiritual culture in ISKCON, those with the service of giving siksa or diksa whether men or women, will be appreciated according to the spiritual advancement and not according to their gender.

Accepting the basic role of the gurus whether siksa or diksa to set an example of performing sadhana bhakti and devotional service in the preaching mission established by Srila Prabhupada, and taking into consideration varna and ashrama factors, whether there is a need under certain circumstances for qualified women to give initiation needs to be discussed.

(1)

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. The gurus from nature's study are accepted as such on the principle that an elevated person in Krishna Consciousness does not accept anyone as disciple, but he accepts everyone as expansion of his guru.

That is very high position, called Maha-bhagavata. Just like Radharani, sometimes thinks a subordinate of hers as her teacher, to understand devotion of Krishna. **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.** It is the injunction of the sastras that anyone who sees the Deity in the Temple as made of wood or stone, or considers the acaryas and gurus as ordinary common men, and discriminates Vaisnavas or devotees as belonging to a certain group or caste, are called hellish

(Letter to: Janardana -- New York 26 April, 1968)

One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*.

(NOI 5 purport)

As indicated here by the word *manastah*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead was transferred from the core of Vasudeva's mind or heart to the core of the heart of Devaki. We should note carefully that the Lord was transferred to Devaki not by the ordinary way for a human being, but by *diksa*, initiation. Thus the importance of initiation is mentioned here. Unless one is initiated by the right person, who always carries within his heart the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot acquire the power to carry the Supreme Godhead within the core of one's own heart.

(SB 10.2.18)

(2) Prof. O'Connel: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?

Prabhupada: Yes. Jahnava devi was -- Nityananda's wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection... *Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-veṭṭa sei guru haya* [Cc Madhya 8.128].

The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then he or she can become guru. *Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-veṭṭa, sei guru haya*. [break] In our material world, is it any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she is qualified, she can become professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, if the woman understands Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly, she can become guru.

(Interview with Professors O'Connel, Motilal and Shivaram – June 18, 1976, Toronto)

(3)

By the process of executing regulated devotional service, one is actually elevated to the transcendental stage, beyond the material modes of nature. At that time one's heart becomes illuminated like the sun. The sun is far above the planetary systems, and there is no possibility of its being covered by any kind of cloud; similarly, when a devotee is purified like the sun, from his pure heart there is a diffusion of ecstatic love which is more glorious than the sunshine. Only at that time is the attachment to Kṛṣṇa perfect. Spontaneously, the

devotee becomes eager to serve the Lord in his ecstatic love. At this stage the devotee is on the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*, perfect devotion. Such a devotee has no agitation from material affections and is interested only in the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

(NOD Chapter 7)

Room Conversation April 1977

Prabhupada: No, you become guru, but you must be qualified first of all. Then you become.

Tamala Krsna: Oh, that kind of complaint was there.

Prabhupada: Did you know that?

Tamala Krsna: Yeah, I heard that, yeah.

Prabhupada: What is the use of producing some rascal guru?

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

Prabhupada: Hmm.

Tamala 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.**

Tamala Krsna: The process of purification must be there.

Prabhupada: Oh, yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahaprabhu wants that. Amara ajnaya guru hana [Cc Madhya 7.128].

"You become guru." [laughs] But be qualified. **Little thing, strictly follower...**

Tamala Krsna: Not rubber stamp.

Prabhupada: Then you'll not be effective. You can cheat, but it will not be effective. Just see our Gaudiya Matha. Everyone wanted to become guru, and a small temple and "guru." What kind of guru? No publication, no preaching, simply bring some foodstuff... My Guru Maharaja used to say, "Joint mess," a place for eating and sleeping. Khaoya daoya adda khana: "Joint mess." He said this.

(Room Conversation – April 22, 1977, Bombay)

(4) Devotees may be divided into three classes. The devotee in the first or uppermost class is described as follows: he is very expert in the study of relevant scriptures, and he is also expert in putting forward arguments in terms of those scriptures. He can very nicely present conclusions with perfect discretion and can consider the ways of devotional service in a

decisive way. He understands perfectly that the ultimate goal of life is to attain to the transcendental loving service of Kṛṣṇa, and he knows that Kṛṣṇa is the only object of worship and love. This first-class devotee is one who has strictly followed the rules and regulations under the training of a bona fide spiritual master and has sincerely obeyed him in accord with revealed scriptures. **Thus, being fully trained to preach and become a spiritual master himself, he is considered first class.** The first-class devotee never deviates from the principles of higher authority, and he attains firm faith in the scriptures by understanding with all reason and arguments. When we speak of arguments and reason, it means arguments and reason on the basis of revealed scriptures. The first-class devotee is not interested in dry speculative methods meant for wasting time. In other words, one who has attained a mature determination in the matter of devotional service can be accepted as the first-class devotee.

(5) A neophyte Vaisnava or a Vaisnava 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.

(NoI: verse 5)

(6) Everything one possesses should be offered to him, for it is enjoined that one should deliver whatever he has to the spiritual master. The brahmacari in particular is supposed to beg alms from others and offer them to the spiritual master. However, one should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or maha-bhagavata without being self-realized, for by such imitation one will eventually become degraded.

(NoI: verse 5)

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

2. Each temple will be an ISKCON property and will be managed by three executive directors. The system of management will continue as it is now and there is no need of any change.

(LD 6: Declaration of Will, June 1977)

(8)

Although one may be well versed in the transcendental science, one should be careful about the offense of maryada-vyatikrama, or impertinently surpassing a greater personality. According to scriptural injunction one should be very careful of transgressing the law of maryada-vyatikrama because by so doing one loses his duration of life, his opulence, fame and piety and the blessings of all the world. To be well versed in the transcendental science necessitates awareness of the techniques of spiritual science. Uddhava, being well aware of all these technicalities of transcendental science, advised Vidura to approach Maitreya Rsi to receive transcendental knowledge. Vidura wanted to accept Uddhava as his spiritual master, but Uddhava did not accept the post because Vidura was as old as Uddhava's father and therefore Uddhava could not accept him as his disciple, especially when Maitreya was present nearby. The rule is that in the presence of a higher personality one should not be very eager to impart instructions, even if one is competent and well versed. So Uddhava decided to send an elderly person like Vidura to Maitreya, another elderly person, but one who was also

well versed because he was directly instructed by the Lord while the Lord was about to quit this mortal world. Since both Uddhava and Maitreya were directly instructed by the Lord, both had the authority to become the spiritual master of Vidura or anyone else, but Maitreya, being elderly, had the first claim to becoming the spiritual master, especially for Vidura, who was much older than Uddhava. One should not be eager to become a spiritual master cheaply for the sake of profit and fame, but should become a spiritual master only for the service of the Lord. The Lord never tolerates the impertinence of maryada-vyatikrama. One should never pass over the honor due an elderly spiritual master in the interests of one's own personal gain and fame. Impertinence on the part of the pseudo spiritual master is very risky to progressive spiritual realization.
(SB 3.4.26)

(9) prathame ta' eka-mata acaryera gana
pache dui-mata haila daivera karana

At first all the followers of Advaita Acarya shared a single opinion. But later they followed two different opinions, as ordained by providence.

The words daivera karana indicate that by dint of providence, or by God's will, the followers of Advaita Acarya divided into two parties. Such disagreement among the disciples of one acarya is also found among the members of the Gaudiya Matha. In the beginning, during the presence of Om Visnupada Paramahansa Parivrajakacarya Astottara-sata Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires. 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. Consequently, both factions were asara, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master. Despite the spiritual master's order to form a governing body and execute the missionary activities of the Gaudiya Matha, the two unauthorized factions began litigation that is still going on after forty years with no decision.

(Adi 12.8)

(10) (Letter to Karandhara 1972)

Centralized management—temples independent and self-sufficient

Regarding your points about taxation, corporate status, etc., I have heard from Jayatirtha you want to make big plan for centralization of management, taxes, monies, corporate status, bookkeeping, credit, like that. I do not at all approve of such plan. Do not centralize anything. Each temple must remain independent and self-sufficient. That was my plan from the very beginning, why you are thinking otherwise? Once before you wanted to do something centralizing with your GBC meeting, and if I did not interfere the whole thing would have

been killed. Do not think in this way of big corporation, big credits, centralization -- these are all nonsense proposals. Only thing I wanted was that books printing and distribution should be centralized, therefore I appointed you and Bali Mardan to do it. Otherwise, management, everything, should be done locally by local men. Accounts must be kept, things must be in order and lawfully done, but that should be each temple's concern, not yours.

Independent thoughtful competent men in knowledge and action

Krishna Consciousness Movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action, not for making bureaucracy. Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing will be spoiled. There must be always individual striving and work and responsibility, competitive spirit, not that one shall dominate and distribute benefits to the others and they do nothing but beg from you and you provide. No. Never mind there may be botheration to register each centre, take tax certificate each, become separate corporations in each state. That will train men how to do these things, and they shall develop reliability and responsibility, that is the point.

Lose of enthusiasm for spreading programs of Krishna Consciousness

I am little observing now, especially in your country, that our men are losing their enthusiasm for spreading on our programmes of Krishna Consciousness movement. Otherwise, why so many letters of problems are coming, dissatisfied? That is not a very good sign.

Problem not following regulative principles—Leaders responsibility

The whole problem is they are not following the regulative principles, that I can detect. Without this, enthusiasm will be lacking. Even mechanically following, and if he gets gradually understanding from the class, he will come to the point of spontaneous enthusiasm. This spontaneous loving devotional service is not so easy matter, but if one simply sticks strictly to the rules and regulations, like rising early, chanting 16 rounds, chanting gayatri, keeping always clean -- then his enthusiasm will grow more and more, and if there is also patience and determination, one day he will come to the platform of spontaneous devotion, then his life will be perfect. All of this I have told you in Nectar of Devotion. So I do not think the leaders are themselves following, nor they are seeing the others are following strictly. That must be rectified at once. Each centre remain independent, that's all right, but the president and other officers must themselves follow and see the others are following the regulative principles carefully, and giving them good instruction so they may understand nicely why this tapasya is necessary.

Responsibility of GBC and sannyasis

And GBC and Sannyasis will travel and see the officers are doing this, and if they observe anything lowering of the standard, they must reform and advise, or if there is some discrepancy I shall remove it.

New men—of quality not quantity

Of course, if new men are coming, they may not be expected immediately to take to our regulative principles cent per cent. Therefore we should not be so anxious to induce them to live in the temple. Anyone who lives in the temple must agree to follow the rules and regulations without fail. So if some new man moves in with us he may become discouraged if he is forced in this way. Therefore let them live outside and become gradually convinced in the class why they should accept some austerity, then they will live with us out of their own accord and follow nicely everything. It is very difficult to give up very quickly so many bad habits as you have got in your country, so educate them gradually, first with chanting, and do not be so much anxious to count up so many numbers of new devotees, if such devotees go away later being too early forced. I want to see a few sincere devotees, not many false devotees or pretenders.

Regulative principles must be followed. Engaged in doing something for Lord Krishna.

So my point is that the regulative principles must be followed by everyone. Otherwise their enthusiasm dwindles and they again think of sex and become restless, and so many problems are there. There is some symptom of missing the point. The point is to be engaged in doing something for Krishna, never mind what is that job, but being so engaged in doing something very much satisfying to the devotee that he remains always enthusiastic. He will automatically follow the regulative principles because they are part of his occupational duty -- by applying them practically as his occupational duty, he realizes the happy result of regulative principles. So the future of this Krishna Consciousness movement is very bright, so long the managers remain vigilant that 16 rounds are being chanted by everyone without fail, that they are all rising before four morning, attending mangal arati –

Not to kill spirit of enthusiastic service. Individual, spontaneous and voluntary.

our leaders shall be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service, which is individual and spontaneous and voluntary. They should try always to generate some atmosphere of fresh challenge to the devotees, so that they will agree enthusiastically to rise and meet it.

Art of management—draw out spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Krishna.

That is the art of management: to draw out spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Krishna. But where are so many expert managers? All of us should become expert

managers and preachers. We should not be very much after comforts and become complacent or self-contented. There must be always some tapasya, strictly observing the regulative principles -- Krishna Consciousness movement must be always a challenge, a great achievement to be gained by voluntary desire to do it, and that will keep it healthy. So you big managers now try to train up more and more some competent preachers and managers like yourselves. Forget this centralizing and bureaucracy.

(Letter to: Karandhara -- Bombay 22 December, 1972)