

## A RESPONSE TO LAKSHMINATHA DASA's "OUR SAMPRADAYA"

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This paper will evaluate the relevance and philosophical veracity of the above mentioned essay, in specific relation to Srila Prabhupada's intended method for initiations within ISKCON. We hope to show conclusively that where the author's suggestions diverge from the final July 9th order, his points are unsubstantiated by Srila Prabhupada's teachings and institutional policy directives.

We also intend to demonstrate that in any case the author proposes a system which is effectively little different from the one enunciated by Srila Prabhupada in the final order, the very system he is implicitly attempting to undermine. (*We note that the points made in 'Our Sampradaya' are very similar to those made by Druva maharaja das in his paper 'Siksa/Diksa', thus the following refutation would be applicable in many respects to his paper also*).

Firstly we should remember that in order to replace the *ritvik* system with a substitute method of initiation it is essential to first prove that the *ritvik* system was meant to stop on Srila Prabhupada's departure, and that at this point those acting as *ritviks* were meant to transform into *diksa* gurus. These are referred to as modifications A & B, and are found on page 2 of [the final order](#). Without offering clear evidence in support of these modifications any effort to displace the *ritvik* system must be viewed as unauthorised and deviant, for the simple fact that the system was personally put in place by Srila Prabhupada with no countermanding instruction for its termination. If the essay in question fails to prove these modifications any conclusions it contains are likely to be nothing more than mental speculation, and should thus be rejected.

Let us see how Lakshminatha dasa's paper stands up to such analysis. His essay makes the following points:

1. That *siksa* is more important than *diksa*. This, the author alleges, is proven by the history of our *sampradaya*. (p1)
2. That ISKCON'S preoccupation with *diksa* is due to a philosophical misconception. (p2)
3. The performance of *diksa* should be seen purely as a ceremonial function for the acceptance of candidates into ISKCON.(p2-3)
4. It is not necessary for the *diksa*-guru to be a *maha-bhagavata* since he merely links devotees to the *uttama siksa*-guru Srila Prabhupada.(p3)
5. Srila Prabhupada never intended that ISKCON *diksa* gurus should have any special status.(p4)
6. The 11 *ritviks* deviated by pretending to be *uttama-adhikaris*, and not allowing others to give *diksa* - 'the zonal *acharya*-system'. (p4)
7. ISKCON has deviated by putting too much emphasis on the role of the *diksa* guru.(p4)
8. The path to perfection is having Srila Prabhupada as the *siksa* guru for all of ISKCON. (p5-6)
9. *Diksa* initiation should be seen simply as a formality to connect new devotees to Srila Prabhupada's *siksa*. (p6)

10. The link with the *parampara* should be through Srila Prabhupada's teachings only, and not through *diksa*. Thus if an initiated devotee's *diksa*-guru falls down it is unimportant. (p7)

Having summarised the contents of the essay the following is self-evident: The author offers no evidence in support of [modifications A & B](#) as given in 'The Final Order'. As stated earlier this is vital if we are to even consider an alternative system.

Srila Prabhupada clearly and emphatically told us **NOT** to change anything, or speculate.

Thus whatever system he told us to follow, it is our duty to follow it. The author merely restates the modifications in a corrupted form under point 6 above. We already know what the GBC did. Added to that the author fails to offer any evidence to support his contention that their ACTUAL mistake was only that they did not allow EVERYONE to become *diksa* gurus. From this alone it is perfectly clear that the conclusions of the essay are likely to be speculative, and should thus best be rejected. The author does not even attempt to explain or justify why Srila Prabhupada's *ritvik* system was terminated on his departure.

He simply makes the following vague assertion:

"He (Srila Prabhupada) listed eleven devotees who would act as *ritvik* prior to his departure. After Srila Prabhupada's departure every disciple could take the legacy..." (p.3)

Where does Srila Prabhupada state that the *ritviks* were only to act as such 'prior to his departure'? What legacy is the author referring to exactly? Who said they could take it?

Where is this idea about a *diksa* guru legacy ever stated, and in what context? Did this legacy principle state they were only to be second grade *diksa* gurus, who need not be liberated or worshipped as good as God? Unfortunately the essay does not even attempt to clarify such issues. The author simply speculates that the *ritvik* system was meant to stop, and that Srila Prabhupada's disciples were meant to act as second grade *diksa* gurus. It is speculation like this which got ISKCON into the predicament the essay alludes to in the first place. How can yet more speculation possibly help us? Thus the paper does not refute the *ritvik* system since it makes no effort to offer evidence supporting its termination. In this sense the essay is irrelevant to the current debate, since even if some of its conclusions were correct the final order would still remain intact. Furthermore the points made in the paper about *siksa* and *diksa* are in any case covered by 'The Final Order' (see [page 16](#), [page 32](#), [page 33](#)).

For the discussion to move on sensibly we suggest the author reads this presentation, and answers it properly - point for point. We shall now show that not only does the essay fail to refute the *ritvik* system, it actually offers a system which is practically identical in every feature. We shall demonstrate this by taking six of the original ten points above and matching them with specific aspects of the *ritvik* system.

**Laxminatha's system: 3)** The performance of *diksa* should be seen purely as a ceremonial function for the acceptance of candidates into ISKCON.(p2-3)

**Srila Prabhupada's *ritvik* system:** The *diksa* ceremony is performed by a *ritvik* to link all future persons to ISKCON's founder *acarya* Srila Prabhupada.

**Laxminatha's system: 4)** It is not necessary for the *diksa*-guru to be a maha-bhagavata since he merely links devotees to the *uttama siksa*-guru Srila Prabhupada.(p3)

**Srila Prabhupada's *ritvik* system:** The person performing the *diksa* ceremony does not even need to be an *uttama-adhikari* since he is merely linking everyone to a maha-bhagavata, Srila Prabhupada.

**Laxminatha's system: 5)** Srila Prabhupada never intended that ISKCON *diksa* gurus should have any special status.(p4)

**Srila Prabhupada's *ritvik* system:** The person performing the *diksa* ceremony does not have any special status, just following strictly.

**Laxminatha's system: 8)** The path to perfection is having Srila Prabhupada as the *siksa* guru for all of ISKCON. (p5-6)

**Srila Prabhupada's ritvik system:** Srila Prabhupada will be the pre-eminent *siksa* guru and focal point for the whole of ISKCON.

**Laxminatha's system: 9)** *Diksa* initiation should be seen simply as a formality to connect new devotees to Srila Prabhupada's *siksa*. (p6)

**Srila Prabhupada's ritvik system:** Liberation for all members of ISKCON will actually come from Srila Prabhupada's transcendental divya jnana. Thus the *diksa* ceremony will simply be performed to formalise this fact.

**Laxminatha's system:10)** The link with the *parampara* should be through Srila Prabhupada's teachings only and not through *diksa*. Thus if an initiated devotee's *diksa*-guru falls down it is unimportant. (p7)

**Srila Prabhupada's ritvik system:** If the person performing the *diksa* ceremony falls down it does not matter since he offers no link to the *parampara* at all. New disciples are linked directly to Srila Prabhupada only, who is the one taking them back to Godhead.

Now we can see that with very minor changes in wording the two systems are practically identical. Given this fact it would surely be sensible for Laxminatha to abandon his speculations and just surrender to Srila Prabhupada's final order. It seems that the author has done the following:

- a. Observed that ISKCON is in a mess, and that by keeping Srila Prabhupada in the centre our problems of defection and disillusionment would be solved.
- b. Realised that the real answer was to link everyone to Srila Prabhupada, with everyone else simply assisting in this linkage.
- c. Developed a curious dislike for the word '*ritvik*', and thus concocted a practically identical system replacing it with the words '*diksa* guru', and surrounded it with a whole bunch of speculation about the role of *siksa* and *diksa* within ISKCON which Srila Prabhupada never mentioned.

Although we have dealt with the essays main argument, with the final order remaining fully intact, for completeness we shall now address the following three remaining points out of the original ten above:

1. That *siksa* is more important than *diksa*. This, the author alleges, is proven by the history of our *sampradaya*. (p1)
2. That ISKCON'S preoccupation with *diksa* is due to a philosophical misconception. (p2)
7. ISKCON has deviated by putting too much emphasis on the role of the *diksa* guru.(p4) a) Srila Prabhupada has never said our Gaudiya line is a *siksa*, or even predominately *siksa parampara*. Maybe the authors can support their conclusions by going to Gaudiya Matha books, but there is no statement from Srila Prabhupada to this effect. Clearly any assertions we make must be supported by Srila Prabhupada, or better we do not make them. On the contrary Srila Prabhupada makes no reference to *siksa* when listing the *parampara*, and even states:  
**'Jagannatha Dasa Babaji, who INITIATED Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, who in turn INITIATED Gaura Kisora Dasa Babaji.**  
(C.C: Adi 1)

Srila Prabhupada would be unlikely to use the term 'initiated', which can only normally apply to *diksa*, if he was really keen on us seeing our line as a predominantly *siksa* one.

If the author were correct it would mean Srila Prabhupada was deliberately confusing us.

How would he expect us to conclude that our line was predominately *siksa* when, in describing the relationships in two of the most famous so-called '*siksa*' links, he uses the term 'initiated'? It is obviously highly inappropriate to modify Srila Prabhupada's final, direct, signed order on the basis of our own unsubstantiated notions about the

*siksa* nature of our *sampradaya*.

- b. The full Gaudiya Vaisnava *sampradaya* is listed about 6 times in all of Srila Prabhupada's teachings. Not once does he give any details of specific links being *siksa*; hardly compatible with a person who wanted to impress upon his followers the *siksa* nature of our *parampara*. Thus how can it be argued that the mystery of how to run our guru system can be unlocked by studying the *diksa/siksa* status of the links in our *parampara*? If this information were so crucial why would Srila Prabhupada give such brief and non-specific information about it?
- c. Without any clear evidence from Srila Prabhupada to support his position, the author has simply assumed the standard GBC 'living *diksa* guru' philosophy. This manufactured philosophy states that since a physically absent guru cannot give *diksa*, Srila Prabhupada can **ONLY** give *siksa*. This 'philosophy' has of course been exposed as fallacious in ['The Final Order'](#), and as yet no attempt has been made to counter its points.
- d. The author also states: "If *Diksa* is so important why did Gaura Kisora never take *diksa* from Bhaktivinoda" (p1) Above he tries to prove that *diksa* is not very important. However on the very next page he negates this own point by explaining that the reason Gaura Kisora did not take *diksa* was because he was already liberated, and a babaji. This perfectly demonstrates the futility of studying the history of our *parampara* in order to invent a new guru system.  
How can we possibly hope to apply standards and principles exercised by fully liberated *nitya siddha* devotees onto a world wide movement whose mission it is to elevate the most fallen conditioned souls? The author then completely contradicts himself by admitting that *diksa* is actually very important indeed:

Only liberated devotees can forsake the rules of *varnasrama* such as taking *diksa*; others who are not liberated must follow the rules of the *varnasrama* institution.' (p2).

- e. ISKCON's whole purpose is to elevate people who are not already liberated. Therefore contrary to the assertion on page one, *diksa* **IS** important. The author just does not seem to want Srila Prabhupada to be the *diksa* guru for ISKCON, even though this is what Srila Prabhupada himself ordered in the July 9th policy document. In order to oust Srila Prabhupada from his rightful position the author first pretends that *diksa* is not important, and that *siksa* is the main thing, and then later contradicts himself by admitting that unless one is already liberated he **MUST** take *diksa*.
- f. Srila Prabhupada has **NEVER** stated that *siksa* is any more important than *diksa*. In fact he states the **OPPOSITE** - on the absolute platform *siksa* and *diksa* gurus are identical, and it is offensive to try and discriminate between them. (C:C, Adi 1:47). And yet the author's whole philosophy seems to be based on minimising the role of the *diksa* guru vis a vis *siksa*, and discriminating between them. As noted above, when listing the *parampara*, this is something Srila Prabhupada specifically does NOT do.
- g. Also the author has confused the difference between the limbs (*angas*) of *diksa*, and the transcendental process of *diksa* itself. Thus he exclusively ascribes to a *diksa* guru the role which can actually be performed by a *ritvik*. *Diksa* is the process of transmission of transcendental knowledge which can only be given by a *maha-bhagavata*. *Diksa* is NOT just a ceremony. The ceremonial aspect of *diksa* is merely a formalisation of this transcendental process, and can easily be conducted by non-realised priests (*ritviks*). This is all explained in 'The Final Order' [pages 9](#), [page10](#), [page16](#), [page27](#), [page28](#), [page29](#), [page32](#), [page33](#) etc.
- h. *Diksa*, in its true sense, is actually a fully transcendental process requiring the transmission of divya jnana to the recipient disciple via a fully liberated maha-bhagavat who is factually himself personally assisting the gopis. It is clear then that the entities being proposed by the author, who merely link new devotees to Srila Prabhupada without themselves necessarily possessing any special potency, are by **DEFINITION** functioning in an identical capacity to the *ritviks* which are described in the July 9th policy document. They are most definitely **NOT** *diksa* gurus. Since they are not factually *diksa* gurus, it would surely be absurd to call them such. Why can we not just call them what they are, namely ceremonial priests. If these proposed entities were actually '*diksa* gurus', they

would themselves be direct links in the disciplic chain, and we would have to refer to them as 'current links' and offer them all respect and worship equal to God.

Since this is clearly not what the author has in mind, we humbly suggest he should just accept Srila Prabhupada's direction on the matter of how to conduct initiations within ISKCON.

### Conclusion:

1. We have demonstrated that since the essay 'Our *Sampradaya*' does not even attempt to dispute the continuation of the *ritvik* system, its contents must be irrelevant to the issue. He makes no attempt to justify [modifications A & B](#), and thus his thesis can have no bearing on how initiations should continue within ISKCON, since the final order still stands.
2. We have also clearly shown that what the author is proposing is simply the *ritvik* system anyway, only using different words.
3. Furthermore we have shown that basic assumptions underpinning the author's thesis, such as the unimportance of *diksa* and the *siksa* nature of our disciplic succession, are not supported by Srila Prabhupada's books. Neither is his proposed semi-*diksa* guru system mentioned anywhere by Srila Prabhupada. On this basis it is very difficult to conclude that what the author is proposing was supposed to happen in ISKCON.
4. A *Siksa parampara* may work in theory. Our *parampara* may indeed be a *siksa parampara*. That's not the issue. The issue is: what did Srila Prabhupada want for ISKCON. 'The Final Order' proves he wanted to remain in place as the current link *diksa* guru for ISKCON. It is not our position to prevent this on the basis of our own speculations.
5. Thus the underlying assumptions, as well as the paper's conclusions are seriously flawed, and should therefore be rejected. The author has apparently rejected a signed letter sent to the whole movement by Srila Prabhupada in favour of his own self-contradictory and flawed theories, with no basis in fact or authority from Srila Prabhupada, which had in any case been dealt with by 'The Final Order' position paper over a year ago. On top of this the author's system is effectively the same as *ritvik* anyway, only we do not call them *ritviks*, we call them '*diksa* gurus'. We have shown that this itself is a bogus concoction since the *diksa* guru must be on the topmost platform of devotional service, and is by definition himself a 'current link'. We hope this will be of some use in your evaluation of the essay by Laksminatha das, and hope he will forgive any offence.