

a response to: **The Narayana Challenge**

Open Letter to Parasurama Dasa



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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 Yaduraja Dasa



Open Letter to Parasurama Dasa

a response to: **The Narayana Challenge**

Dear Parasurama Prabhu,

PAMHO, AGTSP,

Thank you very much for sending me your paper on Narayan Maharaja and the DVD. When I last spoke to you (a couple of *Rathayatra*'s ago- when you pleaded with me not to distribute *Back To Prabhupada* in Brighton) you may recall you told me you only wanted **"Srila Prabhupada without the philosophy"**. I am very happy to see that you seem to be realising you cannot have one without the other. In your conclusion you state:

"If a follower of Prabhupada's mission thinks that he can now follow a person who grossly offends Prabhupada and still continue to make spiritual advancement he or she is living in a grand illusion. Although it may seem impertinent of me to cast aspersions on an elderly Vaishnava, claiming that his teachings will lead others into '*sentimental speculation and imaginative ecstasy*' - Srila Prabhupada's own terms for misguided devotion - I think it's only correct that I speak out."

I completely agree with you, 100%, that one should speak out if one sees Srila Prabhupada being grossly offended, and certainly it is *never* offensive to simply speak the truth. I hope you will not think me impertinent in pointing out aspects of your paper which appear contradictory. My only wish is to assist you in your efforts to protect Srila Prabhupada from unnecessary offence by helping you not to simply add to those offences. My comments on your paper follow quotes from your text.

"In 1996, my two daughters returned home from a devotee's house and asked me the question, "Did Srila Prabhupada only teach the baby stuff?" They were young then, but still had not been spared the insinuating remarks that Srila Prabhupada, his books, teachings, life example, and of course all those who followed him, were somehow insufficient; that they now required to be further complemented by additional spiritual guidance from a more knowledgeable person who had now appeared on the horizon."

This however is not just the justification given for why we supposedly need Narayan Maharaja. It's a similar justification given for why we also need the 70 or so '*diksa gurus*' currently floating around ISKCON, and why we allegedly can't now directly accept Srila Prabhupada as our eternal *sad guru*, but instead need one of the '*living*' *diksa gurus* who will also write books and give lectures '*complementing*' what Srila Prabhupada gave. You told me you no longer hold Satsvarupa das in such high esteem since his self-confessed affair with a married woman. This is probably just as well since he is one of the greatest offenders in terms of writing prolific numbers of books that do nothing but *obscure* Srila Prabhupada, all in the guise of "*complementing*" him.

"There has been a marked increase lately in the bullying tactics of the followers of Narayana Maharaja. Under the banner of '*one love*,' and '*one family*,' Narayana Maharaja's followers disrupted our *Hari Nama* party in London last month. Our Saturday night chanting in the West End was led by Ratanavali Dasi, a young woman who was left feeling insulted and intimidated when dozens of Narayana Maharaja's followers surrounded her, rudely stopping her singing. And again last Saturday we were targeted. Love has foundations in respect and free will, not in bullying and sloganeering."

I am glad to see you advocate '*respect and free will*' rather than '*bullying*'. But sadly you are connected with an organization which practices such principles by attacking anyone (both verbally and physically) who simply offers a magazine about Srila Prabhupada's teachings on initiation (namely those passing out *Back To Prabhupada*).

- I am looking forward to when you also write a paper highlighting this bullying and lack of respect for free will?

"It is perhaps a sad fact, but many people who already claim to follow Srila Prabhupada have only ever read small portions of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and have never read *Caitanya Caritamrita* at all. It is no wonder, then, that their understanding of Srila Prabhupada's emphasis on various subtle issues is extremely vague."

I agree.

"Correspondingly, it becomes necessary to re-present Srila Prabhupada's instructions on various issues in order to restore balance. Now is one such time. To give everyone access to what I personally consider to be essential reading, I have reproduced here extracts from books, discourses, letters and conversations; all of which make Srila Prabhupada's sense of caution in devotional life abundantly clear. His words are just as relevant today as when he first wrote them, since he speaks of subjects that never become dated."

I wish you had just stuck to Srila Prabhupada's words. Unfortunately you also quote from unauthorised, potentially faulty, memory-based literatures such as *Hari Sauri's diary* and '*Prabhupada Nectar*' book. You also jump over Srila Prabhupada to quote directly from Bhaktivinoda Thakura (which you should never do according to Srila Prabhupada) and Puri and Kesava Maharaja!

- How is this emphasising that we do **NOT** need to go beyond Srila Prabhupada's teachings?!

Thus you have unwittingly undermined and contradicted the very case you trying to make; that we should just stick with Srila Prabhupada's teachings, and not go outside those teachings.

"Unfortunately, the human tendency to deviate from the clear path of spiritual life is also something that occurs right throughout history, in surprisingly similar ways, and so he writes about these things too. Srila Prabhupada's comments on philosophical misunderstandings within Vaishnavism, spiritual weakness, and obstacles along the spiritual path, although spoken many years ago about situations in India, or in the lives of his young western followers, are completely relevant and timely today."

This "**tendency to deviate**" became prominent in ISKCON from the Mayapur meetings of 1978 where the zonal *acharya* system was invented out of thin air and then ruthlessly enforced on ISKCON by people like Satsvarupa das; and later in 1986 when this original hoax was expanded into a multiplicity of unauthorised guru activity, stretching right through to the present day. Compared to this huge guru hoax, what Narayan Maharaja is doing is small potatoes (though offensive nonetheless). But I note on this particular "**deviation**" you remain stony silent!

"Although I offer my obeisances at the feet of all Vaisnavas, I feel it most important that the truth is heard by all, no matter if it is unpalatable."

Unless, it seems, it is a magazine that simply seeks to restore Srila Prabhupada's orders on how initiation was meant to be conducted within ISKCON. I remember how eager you were to stop this particular "**unpalatable**" truth from reaching people in Brighton.

"4. That, even though this may not have been his original intention, Narayana Maharaja's preaching almost exclusively to ISKCON devotees and temples and congregational groups, unnecessary constitutes an unwarranted and unhelpful interference in the work of the ISKCON movement.

5. That Narayana Maharaja has gone from being a spiritual supporter and friend of ISKCON some years ago, with an avowed intention not to initiate anyone affiliated with ISKCON, to a stage where he is openly declaring his animosity to his close followers, and in his bid to become the successor to Srila Prabhupada, indiscriminately offering initiation to even new congregational members whom he hardly knows. This he does without any consultation with any ISKCON authority."

I would love to believe that the strong stance you are taking on Narayan Maharaja is due to long held, deeply philosophical principles (albeit recently acquired), not simply because your own project is being threatened by his followers.

"Quite the contrary, Prabhupada stressed the fact that Lord Caitanya Himself would discuss such subjects only behind closed doors and only with one or two of His most advanced followers. Yet it is not uncommon to hear even newly initiated followers of Narayana Maharaja speaking freely on these topics. How can we expect them to do otherwise, given the example set by their guru?"

And people like Sivarama Swami and Satsvarupa are also setting a very bad example by competing with Srila Prabhupada to try and explain these topics in their own unauthorised books ('*Venu Gita*' etc). Indeed it was these very same '**gurus**' who first started visiting Narayan Maharaja for *gopi bhava* training, thus lending him the credibility which he later exploited, and which caused the whole problem in the first place; the very problem you are now having to try and deal with.

"What is the mood of the *gopis*? They were prepared to do anything, sacrifice anything, to please Krishna. Since Krishna is most pleased when His devotee is pleased, we should therefore work selflessly to please Krishna's dear devotee and representative - Srila Prabhupada."

It's always fascinating to us in the IRM that whenever someone in ISKCON wants to preach against Narayan Maharaja they happily wheel out Srila Prabhupada; but as soon as anyone actually wants Srila Prabhupada as their eternal *diksa* guru he is hurriedly stuffed back in the cupboard again with claims that we must have someone else as a mediator. If it was the case that we should work to please Krishna's representative Srila Prabhupada, then

- why does everyone in ISKCON claim we need intermediaries like Satsavrupa and Indradyumna etc etc?
- And how is this any different from those who say we must have Narayan Maharaja as an intermediary?
- Can you see any difference in principle?

I can't.

"The issue is not whether one can go outside ISKCON for *siksa* — spiritual instructions - or not. The issue is whether one can go for *siksa* to a person who quite blatantly speaks differently from Srila Prabhupada."

We are not authorised to do either. By quoting Puri Maharaja and Kesava Maharaja you are unfortunately in danger of doing the very same thing which has led to the whole Narayan Maharaja mess in the first place.

- You need to ask yourself why it is that people in ISKCON, apparently including your good self, can't stick with Srila Prabhupada for more than five seconds?

He expressed concern that: "If they say one thing different, that will create havoc".

Exactly! But no one in ISKCON, including so-called gurus such as Satsvarupa, Tamal Krishna, Sivarama etc etc have ever followed this. The *Zonal Acharya* system was dreamed up after a visit to Sridhar Maharaja of the Gaudiya math by some of the biggest gurus in ISKCON.

"5. That Narayana Maharaja has gone from being a spiritual supporter and friend of ISKCON some years ago, with an avowed intention not to initiate anyone affiliated with ISKCON, to a stage where he is openly declaring his animosity to his close followers, and in his bid to become the successor to Srila Prabhupada, indiscriminately offering initiation to even new congregational members whom he hardly knows. This he does without any consultation with any ISKCON authority."

So Narayan Maharaja was only ISKCON's friend when he was *not* trying to also steal disciples from Srila Prabhupada like all the 70 gurus do on a daily basis. As soon as he wanted a piece of the Srila Prabhupada legacy pie for *himself*, he suddenly stopped being a friend.

"Srila Prabhupada was not sectarian. If he thought any of his godbrothers - those initiated by the same guru - or other Gaudiya Math *sannyasis* were more qualified than his disciples, he would have gladly appointed them as *acaryas* in ISKCON."

But by the same token, he did not appoint any of his disciples as *acaryas* in ISKCON either, apart from '*officialiting acaryas*' or '*ritviks*'. If you can show me any order from Srila Prabhupada where he authorised the GBC to dismantle the *ritvik* system he set up on July 9th 1977 and instead erect the current guru system, **I shall send you a cheque for a thousand pounds for your programme.** I used to make the same offer to our late friend Tribuvanatha, but he never came back to me on it, even though he constantly claimed he needed money for his festivals.

- Why is it that the issue of whether or not Srila Prabhupada authorised any successors is suddenly important only when we are speaking of competitors to the unauthorised ISKCON gurus?
- Can you not see the terrible hypocrisy?

"He Criticises ISKCON's Food for Life programme, the profuse distribution of free *prasadam*. (Why not distribute *prasadam* widely?)"

Jayadvaita Swami also criticises it, calling it '**Food for Death!**'

I trust you will soon be writing a paper correcting Jayadvaita!

"From one of Narayana Maharaja's books we learn that Srila Prabhupada's disciples must now find a *rasika guru*: "After the pure devotee leaves the planet his disciples must take shelter in a *rasika guru*."

And where, precisely, can Srila Prabhupada's followers find such an advanced guru? Might Narayana Maharaja himself be that guru?"

By the same token ISKCON gurus say that we must take shelter in advanced '*living gurus*'

- And where precisely can Srila Prabhupada's followers find such advanced gurus?
- Might ISKCON's gurus themselves be those gurus?

"Puri Maharaja, a disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Thakura Prabhupada, and thus Srila Prabhupada's godbrother, also remarked that he himself knew quite well the spiritual master of Narayana Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Prajna Keshava Maharaja. He said that Keshava Maharaja never spoke of such topics. "So," Puri Maharaja remarked, "*it is a mystery where Narayana Maharaja is bringing these rasika topics in from*".

So taking *siksa* from the Gaudiya Matha is fine as long as it appears to support whatever conclusion one wishes to reach at the time. This is exactly how Narayan Maharaja entered ISKCON, since they went and took *siksa* from him to 'defeat' *ritvik* in the 1990 *ISKCON Journal* (and then later to get *gopi bhava* training).

"After his guru left this world, Narayana Maharaja caused controversy amongst his godbrothers when he wanted to dress his *guru's murti* (sacred image worshipped in the temple) as a *gopi*, a female maidservant of Lord Krishna. Where is the new philosophy coming from?"

By the same token, after their guru left this world, the ISKCON '*diksa gurus*' caused controversy amongst their godbrothers when they claimed they alone had been appointed '*spiritual and material zonal successors*' to Srila Prabhupada.

- Where is this new philosophy coming from?

Then this zonal system was expanded to include dozens more.

- Where is this new philosophy coming from?

"Srila Prabhupada, normally courteous when referring to his godbrothers wrote letters such as this one: On November 9, 1975, to Visvakarma Dasa

"Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated September 3, 1975 with the enclosed statement about (name deleted). So I have now issued orders that all my disciples should avoid all of my godbrothers. They should not have any dealings with them nor even correspondence, nor should they give them any of my books, nor should they purchase any of their books, neither should you visit any of their temples. Please avoid them". "

So why quote Puri Maharaja and Kesava Maharaja?

"Narayana Maharaja should observe the conduct currently prevailing amongst Gaudiya Vaishnava institutions. He should not interfere with ISKCON, but let ISKCON minister to its own members in the manner taught by Srila Prabhupada."

Where did Srila Prabhupada teach that we should minister to ISKCON members by teaching them that they can accept **ANY-ONE** – *any* Srila Prabhupada disciple, *any* grand-disciple, now even women – **EXCEPT** Srila Prabhupada as their *diksa* guru? You appear to be saying that one thief (NM) should leave the other thieves (ISKCON gurus) alone to steal disciples within ISKCON.

"We have premonitions of disaster when we see someone liberally initiate many unqualified people and then immerse those same people in a culture in which *rasika* topics are a central focus."

We have similar '**premonitions of disaster**' when we see people taking initiation from the 70 or so unauthorised ISKCON gurus.

"In addition, Narayana Maharaja does not demand the same rigorous Standards for initiation that Srila Prabhupada established. He initiates whoever comes. Indeed, we have heard accounts of children unknowingly being initiated devotees who were already initiated but had gone to hear him speak and newcomers he had known for barely ten minutes. What the value of this procedure is, I do not know."

By the same token, in ISKCON they have *no* rigorous standards for guru hoaxers. **You can marry your own disciple, have homosex and be re-instated, chase married women, spend millions on guitars, fancy cars and motorhomes etc.** What the value of this procedure is, I do *not* know.

"Narayana Maharaja finds fault with ISKCON and believes he is presenting something superior, yet he, like some other *san-nyasis* of the Gaudiya Matha, seems to find himself continually dependent on ISKCON's preaching. As one of them candidly acknowledged recently, "*We are all simply eating Swami Maharaja's (Prabhupada's) prasad*". "

Ditto the ISKCON guru hoaxers. Every criticism you level at the guru thief, NM, can just as easily be levelled at the 70 ISKCON guru thieves. **Of course you are more than welcome to prove me wrong and claim your £1,000 donation as mentioned above;** but I shall not be holding my breath.

"If Narayana Maharaja and his followers were to simply preach in towns where ISKCON is not established (not a difficult thing to do in Britain) and to confine themselves to reaching out to newcomers to *bhakti*, a lot would be accomplished."

Here you seem to confirm my fear that you are only taking this stand to protect your own project.

- If Narayan Maharaja is such a deviant, then how can a '**lot be accomplished**', as long as NM preaches to those not yet preached to by ISKCON?
- Wouldn't they also similarly get contaminated with bogus anti-Prabhupada *sahajiyaism*?

So your philosophy appears to be that Narayan Maharaja can spiritually destroy anyone, and that's just great, just as long as he

stays away from ISKCON!

Conclusion:

It is great that you want to defend Srila Prabhupada, but why is it that whenever ISKCON is attacked by outside gurus, its members eagerly invoke the need to take exclusive shelter in Srila Prabhupada to try and defend themselves. But the rest of the time they hypocritically invoke the need to **NOT** exclusively take shelter of Srila Prabhupada, lest we become '*deviant*' *ritviks*, but instead take '*initiation*' from people who were never authorised to succeed Srila Prabhupada as *diksa* gurus.

I do hope you will one day join us in addressing this particular *gross* offence to Srila Prabhupada.

Very best wishes

Your servant

Yaduraja das

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