Śrīla Prabhupāda

The Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON

A GBC Foundational Document

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder-*Ācārya*: His Divine Grace A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Śrīla Prabhupāda

The Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON

Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa

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nama oṁ viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine

I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Krishna, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

namas te sārasvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe

Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanyadeva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.

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A Note from the Executive Committee of ISKCON's Governing Body Commission

This work, Śrīla Prabhupāda: The Founder-*Ācārya* of ISKCON, authored by Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa, is officially endorsed by ISKCON's Governing Body Commission (GBC).

The GBC requests all devotees and friends of ISKCON to give deep and careful attention to this work. To do so will broaden our collective understanding of, and appreciation for, the position of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his unique role in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not simply carry the message of Lord Caitanya and Lord Krishna to us. While that in itself is a glorious task, Śrīla Prabhupāda, as our Founder-*Ācārya*, created the very foundation, function and vision of ISKCON as a global community aiming for the "respiritualization of the entire human society."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's role, as you will read, is ongoing. His presence is to be felt in the life of every ISKCON devotee today, and in the lives of devotees many centuries into the future.

Understanding how Śrīla Prabhupāda is in the center of our lives and our society, and knowing how to keep him in that essential role, is the purpose of this text. As Bhakti Charu Swami writes in the Foreword, "this book is not meant for casual reading, but for implementation."

GBC Executive Committee
December, 2013

FOREWORD

Śrīla Prabhupāda was undoubtedly the personality sent by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to fulfill His prediction: "I have incarnated to inaugurate the *saṅkīrtana* movement. I will deliver all the fallen souls of this world. . . In every town and village of the world, the chanting of My Nam Sankirtan Movement will spread" (*Caitanya Bhāgavata*, *Antya* 4. 120, 126).

To understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's unique role in Gauḍīya perspective, we must journey back in time and gain historical insight of how Caitanya Mahāprabhu's plan to fulfill His prediction is gradually unfolding.

Upon His return from Gayā, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu began His *nāma-saṅkīrtana* mission. And in distributing *nāma prema*, "He and His associates did not consider who was a fit candidate and who was not, nor where such distribution should or should not take place. They made no conditions. Wherever they got the opportunity, the members of the *Pañca-tattva* distributed love of Godhead" (*Caitanya Caritāmṛita*, *Ādi-līlā* 7.23).

This flood of *nāma prema* swelled in all directions and continued to benedict this world under the shelter of empowered preachers like the Six Gosvāmīs, Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, Narottam Das Ṭhākur and Śyāmānanda Prabhu.

Unfortunately, after the disappearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and these empowered associates of His, a very dark age descended on the world of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. By Kali's influence, many *apasampradāyas*, deviant sects,

totally eclipsed Caitanya Mahāprabhu's pure presentation of Krishna Consciousness with their unscrupulous, materialistic doctrines and practices. And they did that in His name! Soon, His teachings came to be identified with immorality, dogma and anti-social elements. As a result, the cultured and educated people of Indian society developed a deep aversion to Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This dark age continued for almost 250 years.

In order to revive His *saṅkīrtana* movement and once again illuminate the Gauḍīya sky, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu then sent one of His intimate associates, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākur, to this world. Possessed of transcendental prowess, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākur wrote tirelessly to defeat all unauthorized and deviant philosophies opposed to Caitanya Mahāprabhu's presentation of Krishna Consciousness. Through his tireless and dedicated writing, he exposed all the *adharmic* philosophies of that time and once again revealed to the world Caitanya Mahāprabhu's path of supreme auspiciousness and compassion: His *nāma-saṅkīrtana* mission. These writings would later form the philosophical foundation for Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's systematic and institutionally based plan to set into motion fulfillment of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's prediction. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākur's rediscovery of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's birthplace and his giving of a blueprint (in the form of his "*nāmahaṭṭa*") to realise Caitanya Mahāprabhu's desire that *nāma-saṅkīrtana* be propagated all over the world were a very clear and remarkable indication of his absolute conviction in Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's words. However, he knew that this massive task of spreading Krishna Consciousness all over the world would need the collective involvement of thousands of people for many generations. It could not, and would not, be just one man's work—a transcendental institution was of absolute necessity.

His fervent prayers to Lord Jagannātha were answered and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura appeared in this world as his son to give practical shape to his blueprint in the form of the

Gauḍīya Mission. Within fifteen short years, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura spread Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *saṅkīrtana* movement all over India and attracted many luminaries of that time to assist him in his mission. Sixty-four *maṭhas* dedicated to propagating Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings were established in India during this time.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura recognized the importance of his institution for continuing vigorous preaching after his departure from this world. He emphatically and very openly instructed his leading disciples that his Gauḍīya Mission be managed and maintained by a Governing Body. Surprisingly, he did not nominate anyone as his spiritual successor. He left this world on 1st January, 1937 and almost immediately dissension and quarrel arose within the Gauḍīya Mission. Very soon the institution which had always been known for pure and bold preaching of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings became famous for its embroiled fractions and court cases. Two contending factions fought for *ācārya*-ship and many senior disciples left the institution in disgust. The unified entity of the Gauḍīya Mission as an all-India entity consisting of many centers, several presses and thousands of devotees working cooperatively under unified leadership ceased to exist. Illusions of proprietorship and prestige eclipsed Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's order, and his mission—to develop a worldwide movement for propagating Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings—came to a grinding halt.

Our Śrīla Prabhupāda, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, was heartbroken by this tragic turn of events, but it was very evident from his activities that he perfectly understood his spiritual master's heart and mission:

> 1. As soon as a few New York followers took his message to heart, he legally incorporated his institution. He named it the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and also legally stated its seven purposes. This all happened as early as 1966.

2. To continue Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission and secure ISKCON's transcendental legacy, Śrīla Prabhupāda very systematically established the Governing Body Commission and very emphatically instructed his senior followers: "Don't make the same mistake that my god-brothers made after my Guru Mahārāja's disappearance. Manage the society collectively through the GBC."

3. To secure ISKCON as a transcendental mission with a strong philosophical and culture base, he tirelessly and meticulously translated and commented on the most important and sublime of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings in the form of *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta.* And he emphatically said that his books are the basis of his Krishna Consciousness movement and the institution of ISKCON.

4. And, like his Guru Mahārāja, he did not name or select a successor for his ISKCON, rather, he wanted his disciples to collectively manage the institution through a Governing Body.

When I was Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal servant, I noted many times that he would insist that on any printed material the title Founder-*Ācārya* and his full name be printed under the society's name of ISKCON. I was very immature and inexperienced at that time and often wondered, "Śrīla Prabhupāda is such a humble and exalted Vaiṣṇava, why is he so persistently insisting on this?" I did not ever openly express this to Śrīla Prabhupāda, but it continued to perplex me. But slowly, by his divine grace, in due course of time, I began to understand his intent. The phrase "Founder-*Ācārya*" is not just a title but a transcendental system intended to protect, preserve and give longevity to an institution dedicated to the mass liberation of conditioned souls all over this world in this dark abysmal age of Kali.

Great Vaiṣṇava stalwarts like Śrī Madhvācārya and Śrī Rāmānujācārya successfully implemented this system.

Obviously, full implementation of this system in ISKCON is crucial to the successful fulfillment of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's prediction. I shared this realization with a number of my senior god-brothers and was enlivened to find that Śrīla Prabhupāda had blessed them with the same insight.

Then, in 2006, the GBC body formed various committees to plan and achieve different strategic objectives. One such committee is the Śrīla Prabhupāda Position Committee (SPPC), whose mission is to assist the existing efforts and develop new initiatives to eternally establish Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-*Ācārya* of ISKCON and the pre-eminent *śikṣa* guru for all ISKCON devotees. This book is an initiative of the SPPC.

His Grace Ravīndra Svarūpa Prabhu, who is undoubtedly one of ISKCON's most brilliant thinkers and writers, wrote the book and all the GBC members and many senior devotees have seriously and diligently scrutinized it.

This book is thoroughly researched and based on *śāstra* and historical facts. It is academic in nature and provides a foundation on which we can build a holistic culture of education meant to firmly and very practically establish Śrīla Prabhupāda's position as the Founder-*Ācārya* of ISKCON. Of course, pure Krishna Consciousness acknowledges no technique—its only base is humility and absolute surrender. And it is in this mood that we offer this publication to Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Prabhupāda and all his devotees.

Kindly note that this book is not meant for casual reading but for implementation. If we do that, our personal and collective relationships with Śrīla Prabhupāda will flourish unlimitedly and we will come to very practically understand that our beloved Founder-*Ācārya* is not frozen in time. He is an eternal assistant of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's divine flood of compassion and Krishna *prema*. And his heart melts and flows without restriction or impediment to anyone and everyone who shows the slightest interest in his teachings and the *nāma-saṅkīrtana* mission.

We humbly seek your kind and active support in implementing the next important step in Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's plan to flood the entire world with Krishna *prema*—to firmly and very practically establish Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-*Ācārya* of ISKCON for all time.

Thank you very much.

Yours in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda,
Bhakti Charu Swami
Vrindavan, India
November, 2013

PREFACE

The work in your hand—or on your screen—is offered to you as one ripened fruit of the intensive, many-branched strategic planning project launched in 2006 by the Governing Body Commission of ISKCON. This ongoing endeavor has brought together many devotees worldwide to engage in systematic planning and development to realize a flourishing future for Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement. Ultimately, we aim at the empowerment of our entire organization—every one of its members, all its various units, each of its managing and guiding authorities—so that all of them work united in effective cooperation to bring to fruition the desires of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. From the beginning, everyone understood that one particular element essential to this achievement was, as it was usually put, "to keep Śrīla Prabhupāda in the center."

In this regard, the strategic planning team was acutely aware that the near future would confront ISKCON with a critical challenge: the unavoidable transition to a time when all devotees with direct experience of its Founder-*Ācārya* are gone. This imminent loss became an additional incentive for the work of the Śrīla Prabhupāda's Position Committee (SPPC). All its members understood that Śrīla Prabhupāda should be no less a presence to subsequent generations than he has been to the first. (Indeed, some believed, he could be even more.) How to facilitate this? How to foster in all devotees in ISKCON, generation after generation, an ever-increasing awareness of their deep connection with its Founder-*Ācārya*, so that all encounter

him as a living presence in their lives? How will his mission, his teachings, his vision, his determination, his mercy, become one with each and every beating heart?

As a member of the SPPC, I was assigned the task of writing a foundational document for ISKCON devotees on the import of Śrīla Prabhupāda's position as Founder-*Ācārya*.

Having accepted this assignment, I found myself spending many days and nights absorbed in thinking, somewhat obsessively, about Śrīla Prabhupāda—about his life and his heritage, about his movement, about myself as a disciple and similarly, my godbrothers and sisters. During these days and nights, my mental and emotional states became acutely heightened, and yet suspended from any determinate conclusions. And then, I sat down and, in two or three hours, typed a short statement—no more than three pages—that seemed to come almost of its own accord. It was based on little or no research, and no new finding—simply my own intuitions and "realizations." I refined it somewhat, and, at the next available occasion, presented it to the other members of the strategic planing group.

To my relief, the overwhelmingly positive response assured me at least that I was heading in the right direction. This direction was given a concrete shape by the follow-up instruction. "Great," they said, "so far. Now—write a commentary."

I must note that the general "great" became attended by a entourage of detailed comments—comments requesting, in one place or another, more support, clarification, or elaboration; comments indicating misgivings or areas of confusion; comments proposing other topics for inclusion or investigation, and so on. I took these comments away with me—they turned out to be extremely helpful—and then, after tweaking the short statement, I did as asked, and began to write a commentary.

Consequently, the final product, now at hand, comes in the form of a text with a commentary on the text. The text is given first, by itself. The far longer commentary follows. In this part, the primary text makes its appearance in proper sequence, but is broken into convenient sections. The primary text is printed

in boldface, while the following commentary on that section is rendered in regular type.

The text is short, only 1300 words (5 pages). The commentary, as it turned out, is long, about 21,000 words (79 pages). The text initially took about three hours to compose; the commentary, six years.

The primary text itself is simple and quite suitable for a wide audience. The commentary is specifically intended for anyone who is, or who aspires to be, *prabhupāda-śiṣya*, a true *śikṣā* disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. That, indeed, should be the fixed aim of all members of ISKCON, and that, by itself, will bring about fulfillment of the heartfelt desires of Lord Caitanya.

The unexpectedly long and sometimes difficult labor on the commentary brought me an unanticipated benediction: I learned in-depth things that I had previously known only superficially or formally. I began this work knowing Śrīla Prabhupāda was a great disciple, but now I have gained a more thorough and profound knowledge of just how great he is—an awareness, I confess, that continues to grow. What I discovered vastly increased my knowledge of Śrīla Prabhupāda's achievement and engendered new growth in my love and gratitude toward him. This gift of knowledge has also shown me just how much it is incumbent upon me, as his disciple, to illuminate his greatness by the most sincere testimony, the testimony of my own discipleship.

Moreover, I have been able to see more fully the truly astounding purport of the glorious title he rightly bears, "Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness."

I pray that reading this work will do for you, what writing it has done for me.

I wish to acknowledge my deep indebtedness to all those who helped, encouraged, guided, facilitated, and corrected me in the production of this work. The overall strategic planing mission, directed by Gopāla Baṭṭa Prabhu and his able assistants, created and sustained the conditions which made this result—a "deliverable"—possible. The SPPC, presently co-chaired by

H.H. Bhakti Charu Swami and Akrūra Prabhu, went through a number of changes in membership over seven years, but the consistent feedback and encouragement from all who serve and served in that group proved more valuable to me than I was often able to express. I do so now, in gratitude. Many senior devotees outside the SPPC also reviewed the work in progress. In particular, a special "Sannyāsī, Guru, and GBC Sanga" of one hundred or so leaders, convened in Māyāpura in February of 2013, reviewed a draft of this work, and took the time to provide invaluable comments and reflections. The same draft profited from the response solicited from twenty or so other senior members. Out of this emerged the "final" draft, which was reviewed once more by the GBC while meeting at Juhu in October 2013. With a few more suggestions for improvement, the GBC gave its unanimous approval for the publication of this work as an official statement by the GBC. My debt to the GBC members—for their patience, for their help, and most of all for their blessings—cannot be repaid.

I wish also to thank my most immediate help. My disciple Śraddhā devī dāsī provided continuous organization and tech support to this effort, as well as consummate editorial assistance and advice. My wife Saudāmaṇī devī dāsī was also an acute reader and critic of the work in progress, as well as the unfailing provider of life support. I am a difficult person to take care of, but she did it anyway.

Your servant in Śrīla Prabhupāda's service,
Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
December, 2013

THE POSITION OF ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

TEXT

Prabhupāda as Founder-*Ācārya* of ISKCON

Śrīla Prabhupāda showed great concern that his position as ISKCON Founder-*Ācārya* always be prominently recognized. He mandated that in each of his books the title page and cover display his name in full, "His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda," with "Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness" placed immediately below. Similarly, he ordered that "Founder-*Ācārya*: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda" appear directly beneath "International Society for Krishna Consciousness" on all ISKCON official documents, letterhead stationery, publications, and signage. In these and other ways Śrīla Prabhupāda's special, intimate connection with ISKCON is to be always honored.

As Founder-*Ācārya* Śrīla Prabhupāda holds a unique position in ISKCON. We need to understand it deeply. As *ācārya*, his exemplary personal behavior is the model and norm for all ISKCON devotees. As founder, his personal standards and principles of action, his particular spirit or "mood," take on a societal shape and form in the organization he created. Each individual member internalizes that spirit, incorporating it into the core of his or her own identity. His spirit pervades the institution as the essence of its own culture, and the members become its visible embodiment in the world.

We revere and learn from the many great *ācāryas* in our line, yet as ISKCON Founder-*Ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda becomes unique among them for us. In ISKCON, Prabhupāda himself remains present, generation after generation, as the single prominent *śikṣā* guru immanent in the life of each and every ISKCON devotee—a perpetual, indwelling active guiding and directing presence. He is thus the soul of ISKCON. As such, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself continues to act effectively in this world so long as ISKCON continues as the coherent expression and unified instrument of his will. In this way Śrīla Prabhupāda remains the soul of ISKCON, and ISKCON his body.

Reasons for Prabhupāda's Founding of ISKCON

When Śrīla Prabhupāda successfully established Lord Caitanya's movement as a world-preaching mission, he made the weighty decision to form a new institution, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, with himself as Founder-*Ācārya*. He did this on the basis of his realized knowledge. The essence of that knowledge he imbibed from his own spiritual master. Unfortunately, after Śrīla Prabhupāda's Guru Mahārāja had passed away, that knowledge and realization largely ceased to be expressed in his guru's own—but now fragmented—institution. Hence, Prabhupāda founded a new organization that, as a whole and in its every part, would embody and develop that realization—a realization that manifests itself as an unwavering, indefatigable commitment to deliver pure love of God to suffering humanity everywhere.

The institution that would be able to act on this commitment with united force over large spans of space and time needs a unique form. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī therefore called for an organization in which the ultimate authority would reside not in the person of a single autocratic *ācārya* but rather in a board of directors, which he called the "Governing Body Commission." The Gauḍīya Maṭha failed

to realize this structure, and so, Prabhupāda said, became "useless."

Our Central Challenge

Śrīla Prabhupāda established such a structure for ISKCON, putting the Governing Body Commission in place in 1970 and overseeing its gradual articulation and development. Stating that he wanted there to be "hundreds and thousands of spiritual masters" within ISKCON, he implied that the normative guru-disciple relationship would be perpetuated within the unified institution under the direction of the GBC. In such an organization, many gurus would be able to act with concerted force, operating together with other leaders and managers in collegial accord.

Yet as long as Prabhupāda was present as the sole *ācārya* and *dīkṣā* guru, the structure necessarily remained in embryonic form, a child still in the womb of its mother, its form and function necessarily not fully developed. During Prabhupāda's manifest presence, by the very nature of the situation, the GBC clearly could not assume its full role as the "ultimate managing authority," and Prabhupāda remained the only guru. Therefore the completed product of Prabhupāda's work had to await its time to be manifest.

Consequently, Śrīla Prabhupāda has left to us the task, after his departure, of fully articulating the form and functions of ISKCON for effective action in the world. One central challenge is to integrate the guru-disciple relationship—which carries its own proper demand for deep loyalty and commitment to the person of the guru—within a larger society that demands, in a certain sense, a higher, all-encompassing, loyalty. That loyalty is our common fidelity to our Founder-*Ācārya* Śrīla Prabhupāda, a loyalty proven in practice by our cooperation with each other, within the structures he bequeathed us, to fulfill his deepest desire.

We discovered that the initial "zonal-*ācārya*" system of integrating the guru into a broad structure implicitly created

geographical zones that were individually more unified than ISKCON as a whole. The integrity of ISKCON thus came in to jeopardy. That system has been abolished. Yet we need to go much further in realizing the organization Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted.

It is interesting to note that two prominent anti-ISKCON movements—often claiming to be the "real ISKCON"—have formed by specific rejection of one or the other component of Prabhupāda's whole: the "*ritvik*" position wishes to do away with actual gurus in favor of GBC institutional authority, while the followers of one prominent *sannyāsī* or another wish to eliminate an actual GBC and rely on the charismatic, autocratic single *ācārya*.

ISKCON needs to foster both elements: an intense common loyalty to ISKCON and the GBC, and the deep and full teaching relationship between individual gurus and disciples within ISKCON. We need to realize how there is no contradiction and no conflict. We need to realize how they reinforce and support each other.

A crucial element in establishing this necessary synthesis is achieving a deep understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's position and putting that understanding into action—both *jñāna* and *vijñāna*. As Founder-*Ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself symbolizes—and, in a sense, is—the unity of ISKCON. Therefore he must become an inescapable predominate felt presence in the lives of all devotees, no matter who else may serve as their *dīkṣā* or *śikṣā* gurus. Gurus still manifest in the world tend to make a more vivid impact on their followers than those now unmanifest in form. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda's person is now unmanifest as such, this absence of *vapu* needs to be compensated for by an ever-deepening realization of his manifestation as *vāṇi* (as he himself taught).

Such presence needs to become so much a part of the fabric of ISKCON, to become the essential savor of its culture, that his presence will not diminish even when all who personally knew Śrīla Prabhupāda follow him from this world.

Outcomes

There will be many consequences when Śrīla Prabhupāda's position as Founder-*Ācārya* is realized. Among them: 1) Generation after generation will be enabled to receive the special mercy offered by Śrīla Prabhupāda. The path back to Godhead he opened will become ever-increasingly travelled. 2) By taking full shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda as *śikṣā* guru in his *vāṇi* manifestation, all teachers in ISKCON, on various levels of advancement, will be able to authentically convey Śrīla Prabhupāda's real teaching, thus giving proper guidance, shelter, and protection to all. 3) Śrīla Prabhupāda's active presence will secure the unity and integrity of ISKCON. 4) ISKCON's teachings will remain consistent over space and time. 5) Śrīla Prabhupāda's realized knowledge—endowing him with the specific potency to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness—will not only be preserved but also developed. 6) His books will remain central to us, for they contain insights and directions that await future development to be realized. 7) Śrīla Prabhupāda's eyes will always remain the lens through which all future generations see our predecessor *ācāryas*.

THE POSITION OF ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

TEXT WITH COMMENTARY

Prabhupāda as Founder-*Ācārya* of ISKCON

Śrīla Prabhupāda showed great concern that his position as ISKCON Founder-*Ācārya* always be prominently recognized. He mandated that in each of his books the title page and cover display his name in full, "His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda," with "Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness" placed immediately below. Similarly, he ordered that "Founder-*Ācārya:* His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda" appear directly beneath "International Society for Krishna Consciousness" on all ISKCON official documents, letterhead stationery, publications, and signage. In these and other ways Śrīla Prabhupāda's special, intimate connection with ISKCON is to be always honored.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's great concern. In 1970, some writings by Śrīla Prabhupāda produced by ISKCON Press displayed the author's name barren of customary honorifics and with his position in ISKCON denoted by the title "*Ācārya*" rather than "Founder-*Ācārya*." From this, Prabhupāda detected a concerted effort underway to undermine his position.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī recounts this incident in *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* (4.93):

> When ISKCON Press in Boston misprinted Prabhupāda's name on a new book, he became deeply disturbed.

> The small paperback chapter from the Second Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* bore his name on the cover as simply A.C. Bhaktivedanta. Omitted was the customary "His Divine Grace" as well as "Swami Prabhupāda". Śrīla Prabhupāda's name stood almost divested of spiritual significance. Another ISKCON Press publication described Prabhupāda as "*ācārya*" of ISKCON, although Prabhupāda had repeatedly emphasized that he was the founder-*ācārya*. There had been many *ācāryas*, or spiritual masters, and there would be many more; but His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda was the sole founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
>
> To make matters worse, when Prabhupāda first opened the new *Bhāgavatam* chapter, the binding cracked and the pages fell out. Prabhupāda glowered.

Brahmānanda relates his personal recollection of this incident in the *Following Śrīla Prabhupāda* video series (July-August 1970, Los Angeles):

> At this time, there was what Prabhupāda considered to be the minimization of the spiritual master by the leaders, mostly from myself. I was the most infected with this I'd say jealousy of the spiritual master. At this visit to Los Angeles, things were going wrong—from ISKCON Press, which I was in charge of. The books were printed, Prabhupāda's title was not properly put. It was just A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, "His Divine Grace" had been left out. Even one book, one of the *Bhāgavatam* chapters, just had A.C. Bhaktivedanta — even the "Swami" was removed. I presented Prabhupāda a book from ISKCON Press from Boston that we printed, and he opened the book and the binding just snapped right off. And this was in the temple when the formal presentation was made.

Śrīla Prabhupāda suspected this and other untoward incidents were prompted by an "insidious contamination" spreading from India (SPL 4:94-95):

> While the local anomalies were weighing heavily on Śrīla Prabhupāda, he learned of strange things his disciples in India had written in their letters, and he became more disturbed. One letter to devotees in America reported that Prabhupāda's Godbrothers in India objected to his title Prabhupāda. According to them, only Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī should be called Prabhupāda. . . .
>
> Though sometimes ignorant, his disciples, he knew, were not malicious. Yet these letters from India carried a spiritual disease transmitted by several of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers to his disciples there. . . .
>
> Prabhupāda was sensitive to any threat to ISKCON. . . . But now a few irresponsibly spoken remarks in India were weakening the faith of some of his disciples. Perhaps this insidious contamination that was now spreading had precipitated the blunders at ISKCON Press and even the discrepancies in Los Angeles.

Consequently, Śrīla Prabhupāda took pains to assure that his established policies for recognizing his position were strictly followed. We see his concern directly expressed in letters:

> It is very good that you have already opened the center and registered the Society. This is good beginning. One thing, regarding registering, is that our system is to keep the name of the Founder-Acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada on all registration documents, as well as all stationery, books, and publications. So I see the name there on the letterhead in Subaladas Swami's letter, so it is all right. In this way do it.[1]
>
> So you can go ahead and register our Society there with taking all proper and necessary steps. Before the finalization of registration takes place I would request you to send me one copy of the constitution for our society there so I can approve it finally. My name should be there as the founder-acharya, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. I should have full authority in all matters.[2]

[1] VB: Letter to Deoji Punja: Bombay, 13 November, 1974.

[2] VB: Letter to Mr. Punja: Bombay, 29 December, 1974.

We can see, then, how Śrīla Prabhupāda quite particularly wanted his position in ISKCON denoted always by the exact title "Founder-*Ācārya*." In this particular context, Prabhupāda judged the appellation "*ācārya*", used alone, inadequate and even offensive. He enjoined the use of this exact English-Sanskrit hybrid compound word. It is the title "Founder-*Ācārya*" that conveys the exceptional intimate connection sustained between Śrīla Prabhupāda and ISKCON.

As Founder-*Ācārya* Śrīla Prabhupāda holds a unique position in ISKCON. We need to understand it deeply. As *ācārya*, his exemplary personal behavior is the model and norm for all ISKCON devotees. As founder, his personal standards and principles of action, his particular spirit or "mood," take on a societal shape and form in the organization he created. Each individual member internalizes that spirit, incorporating it into the core of his or her own identity. His spirit pervades the institution as the essence of its own culture, and the members become its visible embodiment in the world.

An *Ācārya*, or, in Prabhupāda's words, "a transcendental professor of spiritual science,"[3] is a different breed from your modern academician. The transcendental professor takes charge of the disciples and after initiating them into their sacred studies, thoroughly schools them in Vedic knowledge and trains them in its requisite regulations and disciplines.

Ācārya comes from *ācāra*, a word that denotes the *śāstric* rules of conduct as well as the observant conduct itself. An *ācārya* teaches such conduct not only by precept but by personal example. The *ācārya* is exemplary. Prabhupāda writes, "An *ācārya* is an ideal teacher who knows the purport of the revealed scriptures, behaves exactly according to their injunctions and teaches his students to adopt these principles also."[4] Such

[3] CC Ādi 1.46, purport.
[4] CC Ādi 7.37, purport.

teaching goes beyond theoretical knowledge; it involves the formation of character based upon the students' modeling themselves after the ideal set before them in the person of the *ācārya*.

An *ācārya* must remain faithful to the predecessor *ācāryas*. "One cannot be an *ācārya* (spiritual master) without following strictly in the disciplic succession of the *ācāryas*. One who is actually serious about advancing in devotional service should desire only to satisfy the previous *ācāryas*."[5] At the same time, the *ācārya* must combine this profound fidelity with an ability to flexibly devise instructions effective for diverse communities of students. "Every *ācārya* has a specific means of propagating his spiritual movement," Prabhupāda writes. "An *ācārya* should devise a means by which people may somehow or other come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness."[6] With his own experience in mind, he notes:

> The teacher (*ācārya*) has to consider time, candidate and country. He must avoid the principle of *niyamāgraha*—that is, he should not try to perform the impossible. What is possible in one country may not be possible in another. The *ācārya*'s duty is to accept the essence of devotional service. There may be a little change here and there as far as *yukta-vairāgya* (proper renunciation) is concerned.[7]

The ability to maintain strict fidelity to tradition and at the same time to be adroit in adapting that tradition to various audiences and conditions is, Prabhupāda explains, the sign of realized knowledge:

> Personal realization does not mean that one should, out of vanity, attempt to show one's own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*. He must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time

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[5] CC Madhya 19.156, purport.
[6] CC Ādi 7.37, purport.
[7] CC Madhya 23.105, purport.

> he must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. The original purpose of the text must be maintained. No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization.[8]

Realization gives the *ācārya* his "specific means of propagating his spiritual movement."

An *ācārya*, then, has mastery of the means to bring the receptive students close to him (*upanīti*) and by so doing to infuse and enliven them with his own spirit, empowering them with his knowledge and realization. They become his personal representatives, that is to say, those who can, in the fundamental sense of the word, *re*-present—present all over again—the *ācārya* to others.

"**Founder-*Ācārya***"—this hyphenated English-Sanskrit hybrid compound—is the specific term enjoined by Śrīla Prabhupāda to denote his position in relation to ISKCON. We have seen that in this connection Prabhupāda judged the title of "*Ācārya*," used by itself, not only inadequate but even offensive. Yet we know that the single word "*ācārya*" is traditionally used as an honorific title for the distinguished head of a spiritual institution. Thus, we must conclude that one bearing the title "Founder-*Ācārya*" has been granted a weightier commission, a commission that commands specific recognition.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the first *ācārya* in our line to assume (and, moreover, to insist on) this formal title. While one might expect to find that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had been formally distinguished by this title, such practice is absent from the record.

An examination of the Gauḍīya Maṭha's English-language periodical *The Harmonist*[9] discloses that in the earlier years

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[8] SB 1.4.1, purport.

[9] In June 1927 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura transformed *Sajjana-*

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura tends to be recognized by two distinct titles. On the one hand, he is "President of Śrī Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-rāja Sabhā;" on the other, he is "the *Ācārya*," used either alone or in relation to an assemblage, as in: the *Ācārya* "of the Gauḍīya community," "the Madhva-Gauḍīya community," "the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas," and the like. Sometimes the two titles are conjoined yet distinct, as we see in examples like: "the Acharyya (Messiah) of the present age and who is now the president of the said historic Viswa Vaishnava Raj Sabha" (*Harm*. 28.2:58).[10] Closely integrated with the formally revitalized Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-rāja Sabhā (which operated under a board of three leading disciples), was the ever-expanding confederation of temples—monastic centers of training, teaching, and preaching—that collectively came to be called "the Gauḍīya Maṭha" and, with increasing frequency, "the Gauḍīya Mission."[11] At the same

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toṣaṇī (started in 1881 by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura) into an English-language periodical named *The Harmonist*. (This title, as the first issue announced, is "the free English equivalent" of *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*.) *The Harmonist* commences with volume number twenty-five, for it is the continuation of *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*—which has now "array[ed] herself in English to make her appeals to the world at Large" (*Harm*. 25:4). The magazine was published monthly until June 1933 (Vol. 30, no. 12), and, after a gap of fourteen months, resumed as a revamped fortnightly.

[10] The Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-rāja Sabhā is "historic" because it made its appearance during the period of the Six Gosvāmīs. After enduring episodes of eclipse, the Sabhā was ceremoniously re-inaugurated by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in 1886 (under the shortened title of Viśva-Vaiṣṇava Sabhā), and in 1918 "re-illuminated" (under the older name) by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. As he explained it, *viśva-vaiṣṇava-rāja* means "the King of all Vaiṣṇavas in the world," that is to say, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and the *sabhā* is the gathering or congregation of those who worship Him (*Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, quoted in SBV I:70-73).

[11] The term "Gauḍīya Mission" becomes used often as inclusive of both Gauḍīya Maṭha and Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Rāja Sabhā. The Sabhā, as Bhakti Vikāśa Swami puts it (SBV 1:259) "served as the official organ of the Gauḍīya Maṭh institution." The following items will convey some idea of the relationship between the Maṭha and the Sabhā: 1) A numbered list of the Gauḍīya Maṭhas appeared on the inside back cover of *The Harmonist* between 1927-1933 under the title "Maths associated with Shree Visva Vaishnava Raja Sabha." 2) Invitations to major events at the Maṭhas were issued by the secretaries of Śrī Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Rāja Sabhā, sometimes on

time, the appellations "*Ācārya*" and "President" fused into a hyphenated form that gradually became the standard title for Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura: "President-*Ācārya*." This compound title is used in connection with both "Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Rāja Sabhā" and "the Gauḍīya Maṭha" (or variations such as "the Gauḍīya Mission" and "the Mission"). Moreover, the title "President-*Ācārya*," like the "*Ācārya*" title, frequently appears as a stand-alone designation for Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.[12]

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stationery displaying the letterheads of both "Sree Viswa Vaishnava Raj Sabha" and "Shree Gaudiya Math" at the top (*Harm.* 28:57-58, 104, 30:32). 3) The Sabhā is credited with organizing the large-scale "Theistic Exhibition" staged in Māyāpura, adjacent the grounds of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, in February, 1930, restaged in September, 1931 at Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha, Calcutta, and yet again in January 1933 at Dacca. 4) Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura, the designated "Parent Math" of the entire Gauḍīya Maṭha institution, is also described as "the Head-Quarters of the Viswa Vaishnaba Raj Sabha" (*Harm.* 27:269) as well as "the principal Parent Math of Sree Visva Vaishnav Raj-Sabha, established for the purpose of infusing the whole universe with Nam Samkirtana as promulgated by Sree Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu" (*Harm.* 31:140). 5) The article "Life inside the Gaudiya Math" begins: "The Supreme Lord Sree Krishna Chaitanya with His Own abides eternally in Sree Chaitanya Math and its affiliated Gaudiya Math that have been manifesting themselves all over the country by the Grace of Sree Krishna Chaitanya under the auspices of Sree Visva Vaishnava-Raj Sabha" (*Harm.* 30:141). 6) The article "Gaudiya Mission to the West" states: "Sree-Viswa-Vaishnava-Raj Sabha is sending out to the West a party of preachers for carrying the Message of Sree Krishna Chaitanya to those civilized peoples" (*Harm.* 30:322-25). 7) Most issues of *The Harmonist* contained a feature presenting news of activities in the Mission. While continuing to report the same types of events, the feature underwent a successive change of titles: "Ourselves," to "Round the Maths," to "The Gaudiya Mission" to "Sri Vishwa Vaishnava Raj Sabha (The Gaudiya Mission)" to, finally, "Sri Vishwa Vaishnava Raj Sabha."

[12] Some samples: The published "Programme" of the 1932 "Sree Sree Brajamandal Parikrama Ceremony" gives the title of the guide, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, as "President-Acharyya of Sree Viswa Vaisnav Raj Sabha" (*Harm.* 30:92). At the reception of the Governor of Bengal at Māyāpura, Pandit A.C. Banerjee "Secretary of Sree Viswa Vaishnava Raj Sabha" in his welcoming speech "on behalf of the Mission" (*Harm.* 31:253), refers to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura as "the President-Acarya of this Mission" (*Harm.* 31:260). In the article "The Message

On the other hand, the use of "founder" in titles of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is quite rare. The most notable instance of it occurs in the well-known Vyāsa-Pūjā homage by "Abhay Charan Das, for Members, Sree Gaudiya Math, Bombay" in which our Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as "the world-teacher Acharyadeva, who is the founder of this Gaudiya Mission and is the President Acharya of Sree Sree Viswa Vaishnab Raj-Shabha: I mean my eternal Divine Master . . . " (*Harm.* 32:291).[13]

Even though we don't find "Founder-*Ācārya*" used as a title for Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, this precise honorific makes a notable appearance within the most prominent of the English-language works of the Gauḍīya Maṭha: *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*, by Niśikānta Sānyāl.

We have already noted that in 1927 *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* was transformed into the English-language periodical *The Harmonist* in order to broadcast Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the world beyond India—a preparatory stage to the eventual dispatch of "preachers of the Mission" to foreign shores in 1933—"The crowning glory," notes Bhakti Vikāśa Swami, "of all Gauḍīya Maṭha activities hitherto" (SBV 1:108). To send these preachers properly armed on their mission, a written work first had to be produced for

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of Sree Chaitanya," Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is "the President-Acharya of Sree Gaudiya Math and the present spiritual Head of the Sabha" (*Harm.* 32:12); similarly, in an "Address of Welcome" to B.H. Bon Mahārāja "The Citizens of Calcutta" make reference to "your most illustrious spiritual master, PARAMAHAMSA SREEMAD BHAKTI SIDDHANTA SARASWATI GOSWAMI MAHARAJ, President-Acharyya of the Gaudiya Math" (*Harm.* 32:115).

[13] Addressing the teachers of the Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda Institute in Māyāpura, Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja refers to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura as "the Founder-President of this Institute" (*Harm.* 31:397). He is "the Founder-President of Sree Gaudiya Math" in "Sree Gaudiya Math: An Historical and Descriptive Sketch," a long article by "Mahopadesaka Sripad K. M. Bhaktibandhab B.L." (*Harm.* 32:394). We should also note that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is occasionally titled "the Organiser-in-Chief of the Gauḍīya Mission" (*Harm.* 26:221, 30:256, 32:254).

their use, one that would convey "the message of the Mission" in a manner sufficiently sound, complete, and sophisticated to appeal to the cultured members of advanced nations. This work was *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*.[14] Its author, Niśikānta Sānyāl, Professor of History at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack, bore the initiated name Nārāyaṇa Dāsa and the title Bhakti Sudhākara from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. The guru and his disciple used to work in close collaboration on English-language literary projects, and this was no exception.[15] Bhakti Vikāśa Swami relates that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura tarried at the Nilgiri Hill station Ootacamund for two months in the summer of 1932 to concentrate on revising *Sree Krishna Chaitanya* (SBV 1:243). Apparently, the preachers could not embark on their mission West until they had the book in hand (SBV 2:27):

> With Professor Sanyal's English *Sree Krishna Chaitanya* published on Gaura-pūrṇimā 1933, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī adjudged that the time had come for propagating Mahāprabhu's message in Europe. And on 10 April his dream finally came true when Śrīmad Bhakti Pradīpa Tirtha Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Bon Mahārāja, and Saṁvidānanda Prabhu set off by ship from Bombay for London.

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[14] It was the first of three projected volumes. The second volume was not published until 2004 (Kolkata: Gaudiya Mission); the third, apparently never written.

[15] Bhakti Vikāśa Swami writes (SBV 2:362-63): "As the de facto editor of and chief contributor to the *Harmonist*, Bhakti Sudhākara occupied a uniquely prestigious position among his godbrothers. Competent both in philosophical understanding and complex English expression, and his heart one with his gurudeva's, he was practically the alter ego of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's *kīrtana* as expressed in English; thus Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura sometimes published his own articles under the name of Prof. Nishi Kant Sanyal, M.A., and vice versa . . . Another important project entrusted to him was compilation of the definitive book *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*. And he was commissioned to write lectures for Śrīmad Bon Mahārāja to deliver in England."

Thirty-five years later, on March 14, 1967, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote from San Francisco to Brahmānanda Dāsa in New York to proffer his own endorsement of the work:

> I am glad to learn that Donald has purchased Prof. Sanyal's book Krishna Caitanya. Late Prof. N. K. Sanyal was my Godbrother and his book Krishna Caitanya is approved and authoritative. Keep it very carefully and we may publish in Back to Godhead some articles from the book. It will help us a great deal because my Spiritual Master has given His approval to this book. Please keep it carefully and when I return I shall see to it.

It is in the pages of Sree Krishna Chaitanya that the English-Sanskrit hybrid title "Founder-*Ācārya*" receives its prominent introduction, appearing first in the table of contents:

> CHAPTER VII—THE FOUNDER-ACHARYAS
> The systems of Sree Vishnuswami, Sree Nimbaditya, Sree Ramanuja and Sree Madhva mark the revival of Vaishnavism traceable to the pre-historic records. They embody the reverential worship of Vishnu. Their secondary value consists in being an uncompromising protest against the opinions of the speculative creeds. Their spiritual synthesis, although sound, is incomplete.

The author sets forth an opening overview of the waxing and waning course of human spirituality that comes to focus upon the four normative historical Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*. The Lord Himself initiates these *sampradāyas* by inspiring those whom Professor Sānyāl calls "the original pre-historic teachers." He explains:

> The four communities (sampradayas) of the Iron Age are connected with the ancient times by their recognition of the ulterior authority of the eternal ancient teachers, viz, Lakshmi, Brahma, Rudra and the four Sanas (chatuhsanah), respectively. The four Founder-Acharyas

> of the Iron Age professed to preach the views of those original teachers of the religion.

We find, then, that each *sampradāya* possesses a pair of members distinguished above all others for their extensive formative influence upon their successors. The first personage in each pair is one of the "eternal ancient teachers" who becomes the "original pre-historic teacher" for the *sampradāya*; the second member of the pair is the "Founder-*Ācārya*," a paradigmatic mentor who revives and reforms the community in Kali-yuga, endowing it with a signature style of thought and action.[16]

The title "Founder-*Ācārya*," as used by Niśikānta Sānyāl, is restricted to those four eminent historical personages, who are otherwise commonly referred to as "the *sampradāya-ācāryas*."[17] "Founder-*Ācārya*" was their distinctive designation. In this light, it is understandable that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did not bear that title himself. Consequently, it is striking to find in the pages of *The Harmonist* the words "founder Acharyya" introduced, in an unobtrusive yet confident manner, to refer to the President of the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution himself. The phrase, so used, is introduced in an important article, titled "The

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[16] The Ravenshaw Professor of History provides their chronological order: "The original pre-historic teachers, who are the ultimate source of the four communities, in the chronological order of their appearance, are (1) Lakshmi, the eternal and inseparable Consort of Vishnu, (2) Brahma sprung from the navel-lotus of Garbhodakasayi Vishnu, (3) Rudra sprung from the second Purusha, and (4) the four Sanas who are the sons of Brahma born from the mind. The chronological order of the Acharyas of the Iron Age is (1) Sree Vishnuswami, (2) Sree Nimbaditya, (3) Sree Ramanuja, and (4) Sree Madhva" (SKC 150).

[17] This is the term usually employed by Śrīla Prabhupāda. In the Gauḍīya Maṭha, the term "Founder-*Ācārya*" was similarly reserved to denote this group. A revealing example: In the *Harmonist* of October 1931 (*Harm.* 29.4: 125) we find mention of "Srila Vishnu Swami, Founder-Acharyya of one of the four Vaishnava Sampradayas." (This is in a description of the displays in "The Exhibition of Theistic Education" held that year in Calcutta.) On the same page, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is denoted "the Acharya of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas." (Interestingly, *Shree Krishna Chaitanya* was not published until March, 1933.)

Gaudiya Math," that saw print in three installments starting with the October 1930 issue of *The Harmonist*.[18] Its publication thus overlapped the festive inauguration in November of the just-completed palatial temple called "Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha" in Bāg-bazar, Calcutta. That institution, in its newly revealed splendor, is the specific referent of the article's title. The first installment of "The Gaudiya Math" forms the lead piece of the October issue, and the facing page bears a photograph of the much-honored Jagabandhu Bhakti Rañjana,[19] who funded and directed the temple's construction. *The Harmonist* article carries no attribution, a practice that endowed such pieces with the stamp of strong editorial endorsement (if not direct authorship).[20] While celebrating the Mission's great step toward world preaching, *The Harmonist* also takes the opportunity to explicate thoroughly the spiritual (and to an extent esoteric) structure and function of its expanding organization. "The Gaudiya Math" presents a definitive essay in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ecclesiology.[21]

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[18] *Harm.* 28.5:129-135, 28.6:163-168, 28.7:216-220.

[19] A highly successful entrepreneur who became a disciple of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. For an account of this householder devotee, see SBV 2:364-371.

[20] The style as well as the content clearly indicates Niśikānta Sānyāl as the author. See note 15 above for his close relationship—particularly in the realm of English writing—with Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

[21] "Ecclesiology" denotes the branch of theology dealing with the spiritual constitution and function of the church (*ecclesia*). The term was coined in 19th century England to indicate reflections concerning church architecture—the construction and ornamentation of the physical structure. Nowadays the term, in its Christian context, has become widened to deal with issues like: What is the relation of the Church to Jesus or God? Or to the Kingdom of God? How does the Church save? What is the church's relation to the world or to secular society? Our own Vaiṣṇava tradition has a de facto ecclesiology, so we can conveniently adapt the term. The Oxford English Dictionary gives this definition for "*ecclesia*:" "A Greek word for a regularly convoked assembly; chiefly applied to the general assembly of Athenian citizens. On the introduction of Christianity it became the regular word for church." The word thus fits our own situation nicely: we are also an assembly, a congregation—a *sabhā*, as in "Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-rāja Sabhā." And, as we shall see, sacred architecture plays a prominent role in ISKCON, as it did in its precursor.

The article presupposes a controlling metaphor[22] used by community members to understand the form and activity of their Gauḍīya Maṭha institution: that of a robustly growing tree whose flourishing limbs and branches extend to cover the world. This metaphor is derived, of course, from the ninth chapter of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā*, "The Desire Tree of Devotional Service." There Mahāprabhu is depicted as a gardener who brings to earth this desire tree, the *bhakti-kalpa-taru*, plants the seed in the soil of Navadvīpa, and cultivates the plant, which grows to bestow the fruit of Kṛṣṇa *prema* to all everywhere. Mahāprabhu is not only the gardener, but also the tree itself (*kṛṣṇa-premāmara-taruḥ svayam*) as well as the enjoyer and the distributor of its fruit.

The Gauḍīya Maṭha institution is a manifestation of that tree. Its seed—so the members understood—had been planted and watered in Navadvīpa, Mahāprabhu's very birthplace, by his agent Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who retired to that sacred place from 1905 to 1914, chanting 192 rounds a day, in fulfillment of a vow to chant a billion names. Much of this *yajña* he executed in a cottage he had built on property where, on March 27, 1918, he took *sannyāsa*. "On the day he took *sannyāsa*," writes Bhakti Vikāśa Swami, "Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī also established the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpur, revealing service to the deities Śrī Śrī Gāndharvikā-Giridhārī alongside the deity of Lord Caitanya before whom he had performed his vow of chanting a billion names."[23] In this way, the tree of the Gauḍīya Mission took root in sacred soil, and soon began to grow and branch out, notably in the form of the Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha, established in 1920 by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura at 1 Ultadingi Junction Road, Calcutta.[24]

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[22] "Controlling metaphor" is borrowed from literary criticism. It denotes a metaphor that pervades or organizes an entire literary work.

[23] SBV 1:66. This account of the origin of the Gauḍīya Mission is based on material in SBV, "Part One: Biographical Overview" (SBV I:1-122).

[24] This premises was secured in 1918 as a center for Calcutta preaching with the name "Bhaktivinoda Āsana." At that time four *gṛhasthas* with their families resided

This image of the institution is presented in the very first issue of *The Harmonist* (June, 1927). "The Gaudiya Math: Its Message and Activities," opening with rhetorical flourishes that give voice to the spirit of dynamic growth, depicts the Gauḍīya Maṭha with the image of a tree—rooted in Māyāpura ("the soil of Advent" of Mahāprabhu), branching to Calcutta, and spreading throughout India:

> By the grace of the Lord of the *Gaudiyas* the message of the **Gaudiya Math** is to-day not unknown to any one in the whole of *Gauda Desh*—and not in *Gauda Desh* only, but over *Naimisharanya, Ayodhya, Prayag, Kasi, Sree Brindaban, Mathura* on one side and also over *Dakshinatya* [southern India] and everywhere throughout the tracts of Orissa on the other, [thus it] has been well proclaimed the message of the **Gaudiya Math**, the principal branch of the Sree Chaitanya Math which is the root implanted in the soil of the Advent of **Sreeman Mahaprabhu**,—**Sree Mayapur Nabadvipa Dhama**. Over *Gaudamandala, Kshetramandala* and *Brajamandala* the message of the Gaudiya Math has gone forth.

Upon the opening in October 1930 of the relocated Gauḍīya Maṭha at Bāg-bazar—which was expressly constructed to be headquarters for worldwide propagation of *gaura-vānī*[25]—*The Harmonist* of that month opened with an explication of the deep meaning of the event (*Harm.* 28.5:129):

> The Gaudiya Math is the embodiment of the highest service of Sri Sri Radha-Govinda made manifest in the modern urban environment by the Grace of the Acharyya

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there; Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had quarters on the roof (SBV 1:68-9). The place was turned into a temple with the name "Gauḍīya Maṭha" in 1920. It was here, two years later, that Śrīla Prabhupāda first met his spiritual master.

[25] "Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī directed [Jagabandhu] to erect a temple wherefrom Gaurasundara's message could be broadcast throughout the globe" (SBV 2:366).

> . . . It is the embodiment of the ideal of service of a single individual who does not belong to this or any Age, nor to this world. By the self-sufficing wish of this single individual the ideal of his service of Sri Sri Radha-Govinda has been manifested in the busiest City of this country in the form of an institution for the practice and propagation of the most perfect service of the supreme Lord.
>
> This institution . . . owes its existence both as regards initiative and growth to His Divine Grace Paramhansa Srila Bhaktishiddanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj . . . .

Thus, the Gauḍīya Maṭha is made to appear and to flourish by the grace of the *Ācārya*. Here is its provenance (*Harm*. 28.5:130):

> The Gaudiya Math [in Calcutta] is the principle branch of Sri Chaitanya Math of Sridham Mayapur. The distinction between the Gaudiya Math and Sri Chaitanya Math is all analogous to that between one lamp lighted by another. The Gaudiya Math is the expansion of the Chaitanya Math in a visible form into the heart of the world. Sri Chaitanya Math is eternally located as the original source even when it is manifested to the view of the people of this world, in the transcendental environment of the eternal Abode of the Divinity. The activities of the Gaudiya Math and of the other sister branch Maths are, however, essentially identical with those of Sri Chaitanya Math and are categorically different from the ordinary activities of this world.

Here, use of the lamp-analogy is telling. Taken from *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* 4.46, where it elucidated the relation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and his expansion, the analogy as used here implies that the institution itself is transcendent and has the same attribute as the Lord Himself, whose multiple expansions and sub-expansions are nondifferent from Him. Hence, the Gauḍīya Maṭha and other branch Maṭhas are spiritually identical with the parent Maṭha in Māyāpura and with each other as well.

And now (*Harm.* 28.5:131):

> The Gaudiya Math is also identical with its founder Acharyya. The associates, followers and abode of His Divine Grace are limbs of himself. None of them claim to be anything but a fully subordinate limb of this single individual. This unconditional, causeless, spontaneous submission to the Head, is found to be not only compatible with, but absolutely necessary for the fullest freedom of initiative of the subordinate limbs.

Throughout this article, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is denoted "the Acharyya," but in this one place, expounding upon the nature of his spiritual relationship with his (equally spiritual) institution, he is explicitly distinguished as "founder Acharyya." He is the one, "the Head," to whom the institution, comprised of all the human and material resources consecrated to his service, "owes its existence both as regards initiative and growth." Under such conditions, the institution is non-different from its Founder-*Ācārya*.

In the second installment, "The Gaudiya Math" returns to a theological exposition of the structure and function of the institution (*Harm.* 28.6:165):

> All activity of the Gaudiya Math emanates from His Divine Grace Paramahansa Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj, the spiritual successor of Sri Rupa Goswami who was originally authorised by Sri Caitanyadeva to explain the process of loving spiritual devotion for the benefit of all souls. The reality of the whole activity of the Gaudiya Math depends on the initiative of the Acharya. Sri Chaitanya Math of Sridham Mayapur reveals the source of the Gaudiya Math. The Acharya dwells eternally with the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya in His transcendental Abode in Sridham Mayapur, White Island of the Scriptures. From there the Acharya manifests his appearance on the mundane plane for the redemption of souls from the grip

> of the deluding energy and conferring on them loving devotion to the Feet of Sri Sri Radha-Govinda. The off-shoots of Sri Chaitanya Math are an extension of the centre of the bestowal of grace for the benefit of souls in all parts of the world. The recognition of the connection with Sridham Mayapur is vital for realising the true nature of the Gaudiya Math and the grace of the Acharya.[26]

It is noteworthy that the use of Founder-*Ācārya* to refer to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura occurs a second time in the pages of *The Harmonist*. In the issue of December 24, 1936 (*Harm*. 33.4:90-96) an article titled "The Gaudiya Math"—this time explicitly attributed to "Prof. Nisi Kanta Sanyal M.A."—contains these words: "The Gaudiya Math is the instrument and counterpart of His Divine Grace Paramahansa Paribrajakacharyya Sree Sreemad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj. It lives and moves and has its being in the Founder-Acharyya."[27] A week following the publication of these words, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura left this world.

In summary, we see that the precise hyphenated term "Founder-Acharya" makes its appearance in *Sree Krishna Chaitanya* to distinguish four formative preceptors who, having inherited the primordial ancient teaching imparted originally by God Himself, were able to revive and redact it for durable transmission, without deformation or diminution, in the degraded and degrading milieu of Kali-yuga. Infusing their teachings with their own realized knowledge, they endowed

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[26] We find this same ecclesiology restated in *The Harmonist* some five years later (March 15, 1935). In an article titled "Sreedham Mayapur" (*Harm*. 32.14:313-315), a proposal to relocate the "parent Math" from Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpur to Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Calcutta, though "asked with every appearance of honest enquiry," is firmly rejected on the grounds that "Sreedham Mayapur is the descended Divine Realm," and "The Gaudiya Math of Calcutta and the branch Maths of the Mission all over the world have their spiritual justification to territorial existence as training centers for the service of Sreedham Mayapur."

[27] Here the author has adapted a well-known phrase from the Christian Bible: "For in him [the Lord] we live, and move, and have our being . . . ." (Acts 17:28).

succeeding generations with a normative model of thinking, feeling, and acting, as well as specific salvific power.[28]

The palatial Calcutta temple was inaugurated even as Professor Sānyāl was laboring to produce *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*. The temple, like the book, was viewed as a major component of a worldwide preaching mission. As part of the inaugural observances, *The Harmonist* carried an authoritative ecclesiological exposition of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's institution. It is significant, on this occasion, that the author of *Sree Krishna Chaitanya* made use of the words "founder Acharyya" to characterize Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Especially in light of their intimate working relationship, the disciple would take so consequential a step only with the accord of his spiritual master and Editor-in-Chief.

The similarities between "the four Founder-Acharyas of the Iron Age," and the *ācārya* of the Gauḍīya Mission are clear, in spite of the obvious differences. In the case of the four *sampradāya-ācāryas*, the inaugural divine revelations took place in prehistoric time. In the case of the Gauḍīya-*sampradāya*, however, the divine disclosure provided by Lord Caitanya occurred within relatively recent historic time. Yet the "original pre-historic teachers," who were graced with direct enlightenment by the Lord, have their Gauḍīya analogue in (primarily) the Six Gosvāmīs. The parallel between the enlightenment of the *ṣaḍ-gosvāmī* by Lord Caitanya and that of *caturmukha* Brahmā by Lord Kṛṣṇa was clear to Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī:

> Before the creation of this cosmic manifestation, the Lord enlightened the heart of Lord Brahmā with the details

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[28] Śrīla Prabhupāda: "The *ācārya* gives the suitable method for crossing the ocean of nescience by accepting the boat of the Lord's lotus feet, and if this method is strictly followed, the followers will ultimately reach the destination, by the grace of the Lord. This method is called *ācārya-sampradāya*. It is therefore said, *sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ* [A mantra received outside of an authorized succession of strict followers is without effect.] (Padma Purāṇa). The *ācārya-sampradāya* is strictly bona fide. Therefore one must accept the *ācārya-sampradāya*; otherwise one's endeavor will be futile" (SB 10.2.31, purport).

> of the creation and manifested the Vedic knowledge. In exactly the same way, the Lord, being anxious to revive the Vṛndāvana pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, impregnated the heart of Rūpa Gosvāmī with spiritual potency [*nija-śakti*]. By this potency, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī could revive the activities of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, activities almost lost to memory. In this way, He spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world. (CC *Madhya* 19.1)

And Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura himself acted analogously to the four Founder-*Ācāryas* by reviving and reforming a weakened tradition, and engendering a society which, formed and pervaded by his own spirit, embodied the founder's unassuageable eagerness to satisfy the merciful desires of the Lord. The four *sampradāya-ācāryas* powerfully countered impersonal monism, restored the true theistic *siddhānta* of the *Vedas*, and spread that *siddhānta* vigorously throughout India. So did Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Moreover, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had been concentrating his resources on going even further: to propagate *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*—the ultimate synthesis of the teachings of the four *sampradāya-ācāryas*—throughout the entire planet.

However, following the loss of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's physical presence, his institution unfortunately also suffered the immensely greater loss of his spiritual presence. As a result, the Gauḍīya Mission became deprived of the power to be "an extension of the centre of the bestowal of grace for the benefit of souls in all parts of the world."

Consequently, the servant of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in order to carry out the order of his master, in order to continue his mission as the enactor of his desire and fulfiller of his aspiration, that servant became the Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. He will remain actively present among us, generation after succeeding generation, so long as we remain his unwavering servants in all conditions, as he himself showed us by his own resplendent example.

We revere and learn from the many great *ācāryas* in our line, yet as ISKCON Founder-*Ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda becomes unique among them for us. In ISKCON, Prabhupāda himself remains present, generation after generation, as the single prominent *śikṣā* guru immanent in the life of each and every ISKCON devotee—a perpetual, indwelling active guiding and directing presence. He is thus the soul of ISKCON. As such, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself continues to act effectively in this world so long as ISKCON continues as the coherent expression and unified instrument of his will. In this way Śrīla Prabhupāda remains the soul of ISKCON, and ISKCON his body.

Śrīla Prabhupāda remains present. While Śrīla Prabhupāda was among us, he blessed us with clear instructions for maintaining our association with him during his future physical absence. We find these instructions expounded thoroughly in the Fourth Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, wherein Prabhupāda elucidates Queen Vaidarbhī's reaction to the death of her royal husband, an incident in Nārada's allegorical narration regarding King Purañjana. Prabhupāda explains:

> Figuratively the queen is supposed to be the disciple of the king; thus when the mortal body of the spiritual master expires, his disciples should cry exactly as the queen cries when the king leaves his body. However, the disciple and spiritual master are never separated because the spiritual master always keeps company with the disciple as long as the disciple follows strictly the instructions of the spiritual master. This is called the association of *vāṇī* (words). Physical presence is called *vapuḥ* [body]. As long as the spiritual master is physically present, the disciple should serve the physical body of the spiritual master, and when the spiritual master is no longer physically existing, the disciple should serve the instructions of the spiritual master.[29]

[29] SB 4.28.47, purport.

The queen prepares to immolate herself on her husband's pyre. Her intention, Prabhupāda explains, signifies the determination of a disciple to faithfully execute the spiritual master's order. Thereupon a learned *brāhmaṇa* appears—as "an old friend" of the queen—and begins to console and guide her. Allegorically, Prabhupāda says, the *brāhmaṇa* signifies the Supersoul. Prabhupāda continues:

> When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāṇī-sevā*. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states in his *Bhagavad-gītā* commentary on the verse *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* (BG 2.41) that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. Simply by following on that line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead. . . .
>
> In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by *vāṇī* or *vapuḥ*. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead.[30]

Commenting on the next text, Śrīla Prabhupāda further elucidates this inviolable relationship between the faithful follower and the spiritual master:

> One who is sincere and pure gets an opportunity to consult with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His Paramātmā feature sitting within everyone's heart. The Paramātmā is always the *caitya*-guru, the spiritual master within, and He comes before one externally as the instructor and initiator spiritual master. The Lord can

[30] SB 4.28.51, purport.

> reside within the heart, and He can also come out before a person and give him instructions. Thus the spiritual master is not different from the Supersoul sitting within the heart. . . .
>
> When the *brāhmaṇa* asked the woman who the man lying on the floor was, she answered that he was her spiritual master and that she was perplexed about what to do in his absence. At such a time the Supersoul immediately appears, provided the devotee is purified in heart by following the directions of the spiritual master. A sincere devotee who follows the instructions of the spiritual master certainly gets direct instructions from his heart from the Supersoul. Thus a sincere devotee is always helped directly or indirectly by the spiritual master and the Supersoul.

We should carefully take note that the presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda in ISKCON is conditional upon one thing: the dedication of his committed followers to execute his mission. Śrīla Prabhupāda has here revealed to us the "secret of success." We should accept and treasure this gift.

The soul of ISKCON. Lecturing on the first verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in Caracas on February 21, 1975, Śrīla Prabhupāda used a revealing example. It was not his main point, simply an example offered in passing. Even so, it captures one's attention:

> So here it is said that origin is life, because here it is said, *yato 'nvayād itarataś ca artheṣu abhijñaḥ svarāṭ*. [He is directly and indirectly conscious of all manifestations, and He is independent]. Just like if I am taken as the origin of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, that means I know everything directly and indirectly of all this movement. If I do not know directly or indirectly everything of this movement, then I cannot be called the founder-*ācārya*. And as soon as the origin becomes a knower, he is life. So therefore dull matter cannot be the knower of everything.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda is the soul of ISKCON, so ISKCON is his body.[31] And because the incorporation is a spiritual one, the body is non-different from the embodied. In this same context, the principle (as previously noted) had already been propounded in *The Harmonist*:

> The Gaudiya Math is. . . identical with its founder Acharyya. The associates, followers and abode of His Divine Grace are limbs of himself. None of them claim to be anything but a fully subordinate limb of this single individual.

Nearly four decades later, we find Śrīla Prabhupāda advancing this same principle in a letter to Rāyarāma (VB: Correspondence: Jan. 11, 1968):

> You have very nicely stated that I am your life. This means you are my body and so neither life nor body can be separated because on the spiritual platform there is no such distinction. On material platform sometimes life is separated from body, but on the Absolute platform there is no such distinction.

Animated by the indwelling spirit of its Founder-*Ācārya*, ISKCON is the embodiment in this world of the spiritual potency of Lord Caitanya. As an entity thus ensouled by Śrīla Prabhupāda, ISKCON itself becomes a perdurable social organism. In the manner of a living organism, it embraces and enfolds the diversity

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[31] The statement "ISKCON is my body" has repeatedly been cited as a remark by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself. (See, for example, the introduction to the 1986 Vyāsa Pūjā book by Draviḍa Dāsa, as well as the Vyāsa Pūjā offerings from China in 1986, from Gaṇapati Dāsa Swami in 1987, from Kīrtirāja Dāsa in 1991, from Nityodita Swami in 1995. In an offering of 1997 Tamāl Krishna Goswami reflects with feeling on this "well-known statement" of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and the next year Giridhārī Swami notes in his homage, "We have all heard your well-known saying 'ISKCON is my body.'") However, we currently have no direct attestation for this assertion. Nevertheless, we can accept the truth of the statement simply on our understanding the meaning of "Founder-*Ācārya*" as presented in *The Harmonist*.

of its individual elements—its members and sub-groups—into a transcendent union, in which each of its unique elements enshrines the concentrated unity of the whole, while the unified whole valorizes the distinct individuality of each and every one of its parts. In this fashion, ISKCON exemplifies that ultimate principle of divinity realized in the Vaiṣṇava traditions: "unity in diversity."[32] Stressing the paramount necessity of its application within ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains how "its success will depend upon agreement" (VB: letter to Kīrtanānanda, Oct. 18, 1973):

> Material nature means dissension and disagreement, especially in this Kali yuga. But, for this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement its success will depend on agreement, even though there are varieties of engagements. In the material world there are varieties, but there is no agreement. In the spiritual world there are varieties, but there is agreement. That is the difference. The materialist without being able to adjust the varieties and the disagreements makes everything zero. They cannot come into agreement with varieties, but if we keep Kṛṣṇa in the center, then there will be agreement in varieties. This is called unity in diversity. I am therefore suggesting that all our men meet in Mayapur every year during the birth anniversary of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. With all GBC and senior men present we should discuss how to make unity in diversity. But, if we fight on account of diversity, then it is simply the material platform. Please try to maintain the philosophy of unity in diversity. That will make our movement successful.

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[32] "The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the living entities, the material energy, the spiritual energy and the entire creation are all individual substances. In the ultimate analysis, however, together they constitute the supreme one, the Personality of Godhead. Therefore those who are advanced in spiritual knowledge see unity in diversity" (SB 6.8.32). In his purport to CC *Madhya* 10.113, Prabhupāda states that "the principle of unity in diversity" is "philosophically known as *acintya-bhedābheda*—simultaneous oneness and difference."

Reasons for Prabhupāda's Founding of ISKCON

When Śrīla Prabhupāda successfully established Lord Caitanya's movement as a world-preaching mission, he made the weighty decision to form a new institution, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, with himself as Founder-*Ācārya*. He did this on the basis of his realized knowledge. The essence of that knowledge he imbibed from his own spiritual master. Unfortunately, after Śrīla Prabhupāda's Guru Mahārāja had passed away, that knowledge and realization largely ceased to be expressed in his guru's own—but now fragmented—institution. Hence, Prabhupāda founded a new organization that, as a whole and in its every part, would embody and develop that realization—a realization that manifests itself as an unwavering, indefatigable commitment to deliver pure love of God to suffering humanity everywhere.

A new institution. The endeavor that brought Śrīla Prabhupāda to America was in fulfillment of the direct order of his spiritual master. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura on two occasions specifically enjoined his disciple Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Dāsa to preach to the English-speaking people. Abhaya received this direction at his very first meeting with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in 1922. And in 1936 he received it again by post in their last communication. By this time, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had seen the debilitation of the Gauḍīya Maṭha's own sustained and concentrated drive that had dispatched preachers to England in 1933.[33] His order to his disciple clearly shows he had not wavered in his resolve.

In the long and varied course of fulfilling his master's divine order, Śrīla Prabhupāda carefully modeled his own creative efforts on the paradigm established by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura with the Gauḍīya Maṭha in 1920s and '30s. That adventurous course was marked by such milestones as

[33] Bhakti Vikāśa Swami: "The crowing glory of all Gauḍīya Maṭha activities hitherto came in 1933, with the dispatching of preachers to the West" (SBV 1:108).

the 1944 appearance of the English-language *Back to Godhead*, the publication of the three-volume First Canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in 1962-65, the 1966 founding of ISKCON in New York City, the establishment of the movement in England and Germany in 1969, and the restoration to India in 1970 of Lord Caitanya's movement, rejuvenated and revitalized. The historical record gives moving testimony throughout to the devoted regard and painstaking fidelity with which Śrīla Prabhupāda paid homage to the exemplar of his own spiritual master.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's literary production illustrates this fidelity: In 1927 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had begun rehearsing for worldwide preaching by transforming *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* into *The Harmonist*. Following those footsteps, Śrīla Prabhupāda began preparation for his own eventual entrance onto the world-stage by starting up *Back to Godhead*.[34] Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura worked closely with Niśikānta Sānyāl on a magisterial English-language book—the projected three-volume *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*—to impress upon educated Europeans the loftiness and profundity of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachings. This work was considered so indispensable that the missionaries of 1933 did not embark until copies of the first volume were in hand. Three decades later Śrīla Prabhupāda reprised this effort—this time working virtually alone—and spent the years 1960-65 in composing, fund-raising, printing, publishing, and distributing the *Bhāgavatam* First Canto in three volumes—1,100 copies of each volume. He did not embark from Calcutta until he had a steamer trunk crammed with *Bhāgavatams* to accompany him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in New York alone and destitute, yet he immediately began working to purchase a respectable property for a temple in Manhattan. The priority he gave this effort also replicates that of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who had directed a considerable—but ultimately fruitless—effort to establish an impressive temple in London.[35] In this, as

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[34] *The Harmonist* had ceased publication in 1937.

[35] On October 1, 1935, the chief of the European missionaries, Bhakti Hṛdaya Bon

in many other instances, the record offers ample testimony as to how closely Śrīla Prabhupāda was guided by the precedent conduct of his spiritual master.

In the context of such fidelity, one momentous act of Śrīla Prabhupāda stands out as an apparent anomaly: his decision to continue his efforts outside the aegis of his spiritual master's own established organization by founding the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Further along the way—within two years of ISKCON's formation—its founder accepted that distinctive honorific that had been borne by his own spiritual master: "Śrīla Prabhupāda." Both acts elicited sometimes virulent criticism from godbrothers. However, a close scrutiny of this undertaking—a kind of reboot-and-recovery of Mahāprabhu's mission—reveals it to be an act of exemplary fidelity. It could not have been otherwise.

In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda first proposed to place his hitherto unsupported missionary effort in the West under the mantle of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. In a letter from New York dated November 8, 1965, he pleaded the case for cooperation to his godbrother Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja, the then head of the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura. Initiated with the name Kuñja Bihārī Dāsa, he had previously been affiliated with the Ramakrishna Mission, and his worldly competence and managerial skills had lead Śrīla

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Mahārāja, paid a formal visit to the Mahārāja of Tripura. An exuberant account of the occasion appeared in *The Harmonist* of November 7, 1935 (*Harm.* 32.5:116-118) under the title "First Hindu Temple in London." In it we read: "Swamiji [B. H. Bon] then referred to the activities of the Gaudiya Math in England and Central Europe, and intimated to His Highness the wish of His Divine Master, the Head of the Gaudiya Math, for the erection of the first Hindu Temple in London and a Home for the diffusion of the spiritual culture of India in the West. His Highness listened graciously to the proposals of Swamiji and was pleased to convey to him in the afternoon his kind decision to meet the entire cost of erection of the London Gaudiya Math Temple . . . ." However, a year later, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura became much displeased with Bon Mahārāja, so much so that he recalled him from London (refusing even to grant him audience upon his return) and wrote the Mahārāja of Tripura to give no further money to Bon Mahārāja (SBV 2:302).

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura to establish him as secretary and overseer of the entire Gauḍīya Maṭha institution.[36] Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter is worth quoting at length:

> I am here and see here a good field for work but I am alone without men and money. To start a centre here we must have our own buildings. The Ramakrishna Mission or any other mission which are working here all have their own buildings. So if we want to start a centre here we must have also our own building. To have a own building means to pay at least Rs 500,000/-five lacs or one hundred thousand dollars. And to furnish the house with up to date paraphernalia means another two lacs. If attempt is made this money can be had also. But I think for establishing Matha and temples here you may take the charge and I shall be able to make them self independent. There is difficulty of exchange and I think unless you have some special arrangement for starting a branch of Caitanya Math transfer of money will be difficult. But if you can do so with the help of the Bengal or Central Government, here is good chance to open immediately a centre in New York. . . . Without our own house it will not be possible to open our own centre. For me it will take long time but for you it is very easy. The Calcutta Marwaris are in your hand by the Grace of Srila Prabhupada. If you like you can immediately raise a fund of Rs 10,00,000/- ten lacs to open a centre in New Work. One centre started, I shall be able to start many others also. So here is a chance of cooperation between us and I shall be glad to know if you are ready for this cooperation. I came here to study the situation and I find it very nice and if you are also agreeable to cooperate with it will be all very nice by the will Srila Prabhupada. . . . If you agree then take it for granted that I am one of

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[36] For a profile of Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja, see SBV 2:332-339. To this it should be added that according to Śrīla Prabhupāda the unauthorized action of Tīrtha Mahārāja initiated the break-up of the Gauḍīya Maṭha (VB: Room Conversation, Bombay, 23 Sept. 1973).

the worker of the Sri Mayapur Caitanya Matha. I have no ambition for becoming the proprietor of any Matha or Mandir but I want working facilities. I am working day and night for my Bhagavatam publication and I need centres in the western countries. If I am successful to start a centre in New york, then my next attempt will be start one in California and Montreal . . . . There is ample scope for working but unfortunately we have simply wasted time by quarreling with one another while the Ramakrishna Mission with misrepresentation have made their position all over the world. Although they are not so popular in these foreign countries they have made a great propaganda only and as a result of such propaganda they are very prosperous in India while the Gaudiya Math people are starving. We should now come to our senses. If possible join with our other godbrothers and let us make an effort combinedly to preach the cult of Gaura Hari in every cities and villages of the western countries.

If you agree to cooperate with me as I have suggested above, then I shall extend my Visa period. . . . otherwise I shall return to India. Immediately I want some good assistants to work with me. They must be educated and able to talk in English as also read Sanskrit nicely. For preaching here two languages English and Sanskrit will be very much appreciated. I think under your leadership every camp of our god brothers should supply a man good for this purpose and they must agree to work under my direction. If that is possible then you will see how our beloved Srila Prabhupada will be satisfied on all of us. I think we shall all forget now the past fratricidal war and now come forward for a good cause. If they are not agreeable then do it yourself and I am at your service.

On November 23, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote Tīrtha Mahārāja again, this time with a description of a specific property and amount of down payment, noting: " . . . I think this amount you can arrange immediately and just start a branch of your Sri Caitanya Math or designate the branch as New York Gaudiya Math."

When Śrīla Prabhupāda had the prospect of a large donation from India to secure a temple, he wrote to Bon Mahārāja and to Tīrtha Mahārāja with appeals to undertake a specific, promising approach to secure the requisite government approval for transfer of funds to America. "Everything is ready," he wrote to Tīrtha Mahārāja:

> namely the house is ready, the donor is ready and my humble service on the spot is also ready. Now you are to give the finishing touch because you are most affectionate disciple of His Divine Grace. I think Srila Prabhupada wants that in this great attempt by my humble self your valued service may also be dovetailed.

In the event, these strenuous efforts to secure cooperation from these two godbrothers yielded no fruit. In stark contrast, a young disciple of a godbrother, a *brahmacārī* named Mangalniloy,[37] wrote Śrīla Prabhupāda to express his admiration for Prabhupāda's endeavor and his eagerness to assist him. However, Mangalniloy's spiritual master, Mādhava Mahārāja, did not share the enthusiasm of his disciple.

Prabhupāda had asked Mangalniloy to urge Mādhava Mahārāja to take up the effort in India to secure release of funds. However, the reply Prabhupāda received from Mangalniloy inadvertently disclosed the antipathy of yet one more godbrother. Here is Prabhupāda's highly revealing reaction (VB: Correspondence, June 23, 1966):

> I requested for this [help on release of funds] to Sripada Bon Maharaja but he has declined, I requested Sripada Tirtha Maharaja and at first he promised [to] see the President and the Finance Minister but later on he is trying to avoid it. So I have to request Sripada Madhava Maharaja through you for this most important work to

[37] This is Śrīla Prabhupāda's spelling, which captures the Bengali pronunciation of his Sanskrit initiation name, Maṅgala-nilāya Dāsa. (In *Śrīla Prabhupāda-lilamrita* this devotee appears under the pseudonym "Mukti.")

> see the President and the Finance Minister immediately with reference to my application as it is acknowledged by the Embassy of India in Washington.
>
> You have written to say in your letter under reply that you want to join first with me then talk with Sripada Maharaja about cooperation otherwise your journey to this country may be cancelled by him. I could not follow the import of this proposal. Do you think that cooperation with me prior to your joining me here is not possible? Why this mentality. Is it my private business? Srila Prabhupada wanted to construct some temples in the Foreign countries as preaching centres of the message of Srila Rupa Raghunatha and I am trying to do this in this part of the world. The money is ready and the opportunity is open. If by seeing the Finance Minister this work can be facilitated why should we wait for time so that you cannot talk with your Guru maharaj about any cooperation because you afraid of your journey here may be cancelled. Please do not think in that way. Take everything as Srila Prabhupada's work and try to cooperate in that spirit. The Gaudiya Math institution has failed[.]

The last two sentences above remain highly relevant to us in ISKCON today. They reward reflection. In the first sentence, Prabhupāda gives two essential directions for spiritual success: Consider every undertaking as "Śrīla Prabhupāda's work" (and not as "mine" or "yours"). Animated by this mentality, cooperate together. Prabhupāda's next sentence bluntly states the consequence of not following the directions just delivered: proven failure.

So it happened that in 1966 Śrīla Prabhupāda gained an unwelcome realization: the spiritual defects that engendered the failure of the Gauḍīya Maṭha remained robust three decades later.

All his hopes for cooperation from donors, government, and godbrothers shattered, Śrīla Prabhupāda would be obliged to start from scratch—just himself, alone. Undeterred, he wrote Mangalniloy, "There is no need for help from any one else."[38]

This, then, is a major component of the context in which the International Society for Krishna Consciousness was born. The other element is the spiritual fulfillment afforded Śrīla Prabhupāda by a steadily increasing number of young Americans who gave their earnest and eager attention to Lord Caitanya's teachings.

What was Prabhupāda to do? In his first plea for cooperation posted to Tīrtha Mahārāja in November of 1965, just after his arrival in New York City, Prabhupāda had offered to work within his godbrother's institution:

> So here is a chance of cooperation between us and I shall be glad to know if you are ready for this cooperation. I came here to study the situation and I find it very nice and if you are also agreeable to cooperate with it will be all very nice by the will Srila Prabhupada. . . . If you agree then take it for granted that I am one of the worker of the Sri Mayapur Caitanya Matha.

The recipient—and many others—having proven themselves uncooperative, Śrīla Prabhupāda then established his own institution.

For doing that, Prabhupāda was duly condemned. Writing some two-and-a-half years later to the secretary of the Gauḍīya Mission in Calcutta,[39] Śrīla Prabhupāda again takes up the key theme of cooperation, repeating the word itself, over and over like a drum beat. And he cites its absence not only to reproach

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[38] VB: Letter to Mangalniloy, July 16, 1966. (The date is three days after Prabhupāda incorporated ISKCON.)

[39] VB: Letter to the Secretary, Gaudiya Mission, May 23, 1969. "Gauḍīya Mission": In his purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā,* 12.8, Prabhupāda refers to the split of the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution into "two factions" over rival claimants to be the next *ācārya.* Much litigation ensued. The faction headquartered at the Calcutta Bāg-bazar temple took the name "Gauḍīya Mission," while the faction headquartered at the Māyāpura Śrī Caitanya Maṭha under Tīrtha Mahārāja was called "Gauḍīya Maṭha." Even now a sign placed by the main altar there proclaims:

It is the parent Math of all the Gaudiya Maths
Sri Chaitanya Math Sri Mandir

his godbrothers but also to cleverly vindicate his own founding of ISKCON:

> . . . . in the matter of my activities of spreading the objective of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Maharaja, I am prepared to cooperate with the Gaudiya Mission in all respects, but I do not know under what condition you wish to cooperate with me. But I am prepared to accept any condition for getting your cooperation in full. So I shall be glad to know from you under what condition our cooperation is possible. But I am prepared in every respect and I shall await your reply with interest.
>
> So far as my starting a separate organization known as International Society for Krishna Consciousness, it was inevitable because none of our godbrothers are cooperating with one another. Every one of us is conducting his own institution, and there is difference of opinion even between Gaudiya Mission and Gaudiya Math.
>
> So if it is now possible to combine ourselves together, I shall be the first man to welcome this good opportunity. But apart from others, if Gaudiya Mission is prepared to cooperate with me, I am prepared to accept this cooperation in any condition. Please therefore let me know your terms of cooperation, and I shall be very glad to consider it.

Three days after writing his response, Śrīla Prabhupāda disclosed his mind in a letter to his disciple Brahmānanda Dāsa:

> Regarding the Gaudiya Mission letter of Dr. Syama Sundar Brahmacari, I have replied asking them the terms of cooperation which he has mentioned. Let us see their terms, although it is a hopeless business. Still, as you know, I never become hopeless in any case. So I am negotiating with them to see how we can cooperate.

It should be noted that Śrīla Prabhupāda went on making efforts at cooperative endeavors with Gauḍīya Maṭha members up until

his last breath.[40] His persistence is testimony to his commitment to the order of his spiritual master. This is his spirit, conveyed by an epigram: "It is a hopeless business, but I never become hopeless."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's persistent invocation of the idea of cooperation in these letters discloses that the word carries special significance for him. We should take a little time to grasp it. The English word is derived from a Latin root meaning simply "to work together with," but in Prabhupāda's teachings the term becomes freighted with profound spiritual import. In a lecture (Seattle, 1968), Śrīla Prabhupāda conveyed this import with characteristic simplicity: "When you do something in cooperation with the Lord, that is called bhakti." This cooperation with Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda stresses, is essentially voluntary:

> We are persons and Kṛṣṇa is a person, and our relationship with Kṛṣṇa is always open as a voluntary agreement. That voluntary attitude—"Yes, Kṛṣṇa, I shall gladly cooperate. Whatever You say"—that ready willingness to obey is only possible if there is love. Forcing will not make me agree. But if there is love, oh, I shall gladly do it. That is bhakti. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.[41]

Cooperation is the vital principle of all healthy social relationships, and it attains its highest application in divinity. The Lord is supremely personal. Therefore He is supremely social, for personhood becomes manifest only in relationships with other persons. For that reason, as Prabhupāda said many

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[40] In his last two month on earth, Śrīla Prabhupāda put time and energy into establishing the Bhaktivedanta Swami Charity Trust, with the central aim of uniting the Sārasvata family—the followers of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—in a cooperative effort to restore and develop Gaura-maṇḍala-bhūmi. Tamal Krishna Goswami recorded how Śrīla Prabhupāda laid down the aim and provided a concrete example. Prabhupāda said, "No more non-cooperation. Now everyone cooperate to spread Lord Caitanya's movement. Just like Śrīdhara Mahārāja is having trouble finishing his Nath Mandir. So in that way, cooperate" (TKG 293).

[41] Letter to an unnamed Gurukula teacher, quoted in BTG 54.17 (1973).

times, "Kṛṣṇa is never alone." On one occasion, he noted: "When we speak of Kṛṣṇa, 'Kṛṣṇa' means Kṛṣṇa with His devotees" (VB: Lecture, Los Angeles, Jan. 10, 1969). The Lord's devotees even become integral to His own identity. Kṛṣṇa's own names often illustrate this fact by including names of his intimate devotees: Yaśodānandana, Rāmānuja, Rādhāramaṇa, and so on. Thus, the supremely absolute is at the same time supremely relative—entering into relationships with all varieties of individual devotees. As a result, all those diversities become increasingly integrated into a more perfect union. In such a way, a transcendent relativity is manifest as a society of the utmost harmonious cooperation, and through the conduct of those relationships the Lord—and His associates—eternally increase in beauty, opulence, bliss, and knowledge.

Salvation for a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava means socialization into this highest society—being accepted, for example, into the company of the Six Gosvāmīs or into that circle of *gopīs* who may serve Rati-mañjarī or Lalitā-sakhī. Damnation is the opposite: isolation and exclusion. We self-alienated, non-cooperative living entities—living here in exile, isolated in solitary confinement by the impervious walls of our egoism—are always summoned to return as fully integrated members of that transcendent society. And *bhakti-yoga* is the practice by which we become fit to rejoin it. By *bhakti*, we become increasingly integrated into the divine society, closer to Kṛṣṇa and closer to His associates, and at the same time, we try to bring others with us. "And this is the highest yoga," Śrīla Prabhupāda said in 1968 in San Francisco.

> If you push on this movement of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then you'll be performing the highest type of yoga. Don't be misled by so-called 'yogas.' This is yoga. Yoga means cooperation, cooperation with the Supreme.

Bhakti is the yoga of cooperation. Of all spiritual societies in this world, the Saṅkīrtana movement most fully leads us into this transcendent cooperation. Since saṅkīrtana is the *yuga-dharma*, in this age of quarrel, we will return to the kingdom of Kṛṣṇa not

as isolated individuals but all together. "We will have another ISKCON there," wrote Śrīla Prabhupāda.[42]

Prabhupāda's founding of ISKCON was "inevitable" because of the failure of cooperation within the Gauḍīya Maṭha. The new, but inevitable, institution was meticulously crafted by Śrīla Prabhupāda, who faithfully accepted as his ecclesiological template his spiritual master's own institution—by then hopelessly shattered. The incorporation of ISKCON in July of 1966 proved to be only the first of a sequence of five crucial steps in the reconstitution of Lord Caitanya's movement. In the summer of 1966, the bearer of the grand—if not grandiloquent—title "International Society for Krishna Consciousness" encompassed no more than a seventy-year-old man, a rundown storefront, and a band of ragtag kids. Yet the seed had been planted and would fructify.[43] It took another four years or so for all the requisite elements to become manifest, so that ISKCON was made fit to become the fruition and fulfillment of the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution.[44]

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness. It is a brand-new name for a new society, a name embellished by a neat, entirely *au courant* acronym. Although the name is new, it harks back to two very old names, and those names disclose that the society, brand-new though it be, is a deeply connected perpetuation of its own ancient and modern heritage.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself depicts his English coinage "Krishna consciousness" as a translation of the Sanskrit compound *kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*. He writes: "Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement

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[42] VB: Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa. Ahmedabad, 14 Dec., 1972.

[43] The "seed" itself is Śrīla Prabhupāda, sprung from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's Gauḍīya Maṭha. Although the parent plant perished, its seed was borne across the waters, whereupon it took root, flourished, and fructified. Of course, Prabhupāda is described as "planting the seed," for the neonatal ISKCON is a seed as well. Both can be called seeds, on the ecclesiological principle that the spiritual institution is non-different from the Founder-*Ācārya*.

[44] Yet still on condition that ISKCON remained wholesome.

is therefore called *kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta-saṅgha*, the association of persons who are simply satisfied in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa" (SB 9.9.45, purport). Should the reader at this point wonder where the "international" is in *kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta-saṅgha*, Prabhupāda avers, in effect, that it is inherent in *kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*:

> One who is absorbed in *kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* has no material benefits to ask from Kṛṣṇa. Instead, such a person prays to the Lord for the benediction of being able to spread His glories all over the worlds.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness not only gives bliss to the devotees who possess it but also impels them to give it to others, spreading it "all over the worlds."

Bearing this in mind, we can see that the phrase *kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* alludes to an important verse in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (CC *Ādi-līlā* 16.1):

> *vande śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanyaṁ kṛṣṇa-bhāvāmṛtaṁ hi yaḥ*
> *āsvādyāsvādayan bhaktān prema-dīkṣām aśikṣayat*
>
> Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who personally tasted the nectar of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa and then instructed His devotees how to taste it. Thus He enlightened them about ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa to initiate them into transcendental knowledge.

Here the nature of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's "ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa" is such that he relishes it himself and causes others to do so. Those devotees who thus receive *kṛṣṇa-bhāvāmṛta* themselves come to be both tasters and givers of it. In this way, the society for Kṛṣṇa consciousness naturally becomes "international."

Two names for Mahāprabhu appear in the first line of this verse: *kṛṣṇa-caitanya and kṛṣṇa-bhāvāmṛta.* They are nearly synonymous, both indicating a person whose consciousness is absorbed in Kṛṣṇa.[45] Both words, then, can be rendered equally

[45] This may be somewhat more so when the *Caitanya-caritāmṛita*'s *kṛṣṇa-bhāvāmṛta* becomes tweaked to *kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta.* There is little difference between the

well as "Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Thus, Lord Caitanya's personal name—rendered into English as "Kṛṣṇa consciousness"— is encoded in the name of the society founded by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The other historical progenitor of "International Society for Krishna Consciousness" is "*viśva-vaiṣṇava-rāja-sabhā*." These words appear within the ceremonious declaration that closes each book of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhāgavata-sandarbha*. The word *sabhā* means "society." The word *viśva* means "the whole world," for which "international" will serve. We can take the referent of "*vaiṣṇava-rāja*"—literally "the king of Vaiṣṇavas"—to be Lord Caitanya, as we find in the *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* article reporting Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's "reestablishment" of the society in 1919:[46] "Śrī Caitanyadeva is Kṛṣṇacandra Himself, the king of all Vaiṣṇavas in the world, *Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-rāja*. The gathering of His devotees is the *Śrī Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-rāja-sabhā*."

If the words "Krishna Consciousness" in the name of Prabhupāda's society encodes the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, and if "*vaiṣṇava-rāja*" denotes Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, then the appellation "International Society for Krishna Consciousness" also pays homage to *viśva-vaiṣṇava-rāja-sabhā*. If, alternatively "*vaiṣṇava-rāja*" is taken to refer to those leading devotees who have attained an advanced stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness,[47] Śrīla Prabhupāda's English name for his institution will serve just as well. In any case, we see that the name "International Society

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meanings of the two words, but to put a nice point on it, *kṛṣṇa-bhāva* can be taken to denote a feeling; *kṛṣṇa-bhāvana,* a complete state of being. However, the nature of *kṛṣṇa-bhāva* itself is such that it is all-absorbing *kṛṣṇa-bhāvana*. This later word, we should note, makes a eminent appearance in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature, as Śrīla Prabhupāda points out: "Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has given us a transcendental literary work entitled *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta,* which is full with Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Exalted devotees can remain absorbed in Kṛṣṇa-thought by reading such books" (*Kṛṣṇa* Ch. 46).

[46] See SBV I:70-73, for an English translation of the article.

[47] This sense is widespread. For example: "'Visva-vaishnava-raja-sabha' refers to the society which is composed of those Vaishnavas who are the kings (i.e. the foremost) of all the Vaishnavas present in this world" (Bhakitikusum Sraman 355).

for Krishna Consciousness" signifies, by its web of allusions and associations, that the society so named remains profoundly connected with and nourished by its Gauḍīya heritage, even as, at the same time, the society revitalizes that tradition in order to carry it forward, retrofitted for multicultural efficacy on the worldwide stage.

In doing this, Śrīla Prabhupāda is remaining faithful to his own great predecessors in the tradition. In 1919, his own spiritual master had formally "reestablished" Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Sabhā, restoring its old name Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Rāja-Sabhā. On that occasion, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura noted that the eternally situated Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Rāja-Sabhā, which descended to the world with Mahāprabhu and His associates, has sometimes become occluded by the illusory potency; however, powerful devotees arise to reignite it and dispel the darkness of the world.

So it happened that, after the time of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, the Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Rāja-Sabhā became nearly undetectable, until "In 399 Gaura Era (1885 A.D.), a brilliant star of the universal Vaiṣṇava firmament re-illuminated the Śrī Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-rāja-sabhā." This "brilliant star" was Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, "the servant of the king of universal Vaiṣṇavas," who endowed his reformed and revitalized Sabhā with spiritual energy and achievement. In 1919, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura recast and reenergized the Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Rāja-Sabhā, introducing into the Gauḍīya tradition an organized monastic preaching order of *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* centered in temples. The Mission swiftly spread throughout India and made an initial foray into Europe, only to have its light again vanish for thirty long years. Then, in 1966, in New York City—having single-handedly established his tradition in the West, and having discovered what was left of the Gauḍīya Maṭha to have become "useless"[48]— Śrīla Prabhupāda,

[48] CC *Ādi* 12.8, purport. Such statements do not express the whole of Śrīla Prabhupāda's attitude toward his godbrothers. Another, more appreciative, perspective occasionally finds expression. Here are two examples. In the purport

following in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessors, effected once again a re-illumination of the Viśva-Vaiṣṇava-Rāja-Sabhā, now restored and re-energized in the name and style of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda. Followers became initiated, increased in number, and began opening temples in quick succession: San Francisco, then Montreal, Los Angeles, then Boston, and on and on. Devotees advanced in the disciplines of discipleship, and, as they did so, they became increasingly enabled to understand their master. Just as the *mahā-mantra* gradually reveals itself to those who properly chant, so the spiritual master becomes revealed to the disciples who properly follow. As a result, "the Swami" and "Swamiji" became "Śrīla Prabhupāda." This happened in Boston, in an impromptu exchange. Govinda Dāsī recollects:

> All along everyone knew him as Swamiji. This is up until May of 1968. So Goursundar [Govinda Dāsī's husband] decided he wanted to call me Govindaji, and so he asked Prabhupāda and Prabhupāda said, "No, actually 'ji' is a third-class form of address. It's better not to call her Govindaji." So I piped up, I was sitting right in front of him and I said, "Well, if it's a third-class form of address, why are we calling you 'ji'? Why are we calling you

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to SB 4.28.31, Prabhupāda writes: "The disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja are all Godbrothers, and although there are some differences of opinion, and although we are not acting conjointly, every one of us is spreading this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement according to his own capacity and producing many disciples to spread it all over the world." And in a letter of November 18, 1967 to his disciple Brahmānanda, Prabhupāda explains: "Even amongst our God-brothers we have misunderstanding but none of us is astray from the service of Krishna. My Guru Maharaja ordered us to execute his mission combinedly. Unfortunately we are now separated. But none of us have stopped preaching Krishna Consciousness. Even if there was misunderstanding amongst the God-brothers of my Guru Maharaja none of them deviated from the transcendental loving service of Krishna. The idea is that provocation and misunderstanding may remain between one man and another. But our staunch faith in Krishna Consciousness may not allow any material disruption."

> Swamiji?" And he said, "It's not very important." I said, "Oh, no, it's very important. If it's a third-class form of address, then we don't want to call you that. We want to call you the most first-class form of address. So tell us what would be a good name for us to call you by." And he was very humble, very reluctant, but I pressed him, "We've got to change this," and he said, "You can call me Gurudev or Guru Mahārāj or Prabhupāda." So I said, "Well, that's three. We need one." So I said, "Well, which one is the best?" and he answered, "Śrīla Prabhupāda is nice, that is the best." So I said, "From today you will be called Śrīla Prabhupāda." So I told all the devotees. Some of the devotees didn't like it because it kind of is a tongue twister, "Prabhupāda," and "Swamiji" kind of flows more easily. But we gradually started calling him Śrīla Prabhupāda from that time.[49]

The way of the change was low-key and casual; the change itself, momentous. It would not have been so for "Gurudeva" or "Guru Mahārāja"—since both are in widespread common use. But "Prabhupāda" is exceptional.

The word appears in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya 10:23), which quotes Kāśī Miśra referring to Lord Caitanya Himself as "Prabhupāda." Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

> In this verse the word *prabhupāda*, referring to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, is significant. Regarding this, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda comments, "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and all His servants address Him as Prabhupāda. This means that there are many *prabhus* taking shelter under His lotus feet." The pure Vaiṣṇava is addressed as *prabhu*, and this address is an etiquette observed between Vaiṣṇavas. When many *prabhus* remain under the shelter of the

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[49] Govinda Dāsī, DVD 1: "November 1965 – Summer 1970." *Following Śrīla Prabhupāda : A Chronological Series*. (ISKCON Cinema, 2006). Transcription from The Bhaktivedanta VedaBase 2011.1.

> lotus feet of another *prabhu*, the address Prabhupāda is given. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Advaita Prabhu are also addressed as Prabhupāda. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Advaita Prabhu and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu are all *viṣṇu-tattva*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore all living entities are under Their lotus feet. Lord Viṣṇu is the eternal Lord of everyone, and the representative of Lord Viṣṇu is the Lord's confidential servant. Such a person acts as the spiritual master for neophyte Vaiṣṇavas; therefore the spiritual master is as respectable as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya or Lord Viṣṇu Himself. For this reason the spiritual master is addressed as Oṁ Viṣṇupāda or Prabhupāda.

Within our lineage "Prabhupāda" is used in particular to honor the luminaries who comprise the Six Gosvāmīs, and then—centuries later—Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.[50] The

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[50] In referring to the Six Gosvāmīs, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself tends to confine his use of "Prabhupāda" to Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Jīva. Previous *ācāryas* have applied the honorific to other members as well. For example, in a lecture of October 16, 1932, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura refers to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī as "Dāsa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda" (VB: *Amṛta Vāṇī*, Appendix), and in his commentary to Caitanya-bhāgavata, Ādi 1.25, he quotes Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, who refers to Sanātana Gosvāmī as "Our Prabhupāda, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī." We should note that this exalted title has fallen into cheap usage within some deviant communities (*apa-sampradāyas*). Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to this when, in his purport to CC Madhya 10.23, he writes: "The *prākṛta-sahajiyās* are not even worthy of being called Vaiṣṇavas. They think that only caste *gosvāmīs* should be called Prabhupāda. Such ignorant *sahajiyās* . . . are envious of a bona fide spiritual master who is addressed as Prabhupāda, and they commit offenses by considering a bona fide spiritual master an ordinary human being or a member of a certain caste." Jayapatāka Swāmī also recounts a conversation with Śrīla Prabhupāda directly after Prabhupāda had met with some godbrothers: "Prabhupāda called us back in. He said, 'They are upset that I am using the name Prabhupāda, so I said, '"What can I do? My disciples call me that."' Then Prabhupāda said that actually the name Prabhupāda was very common among the caste *gosvāmīs* and other residents of Navadvīpa. So it was not an isolated name. He liked to keep it because he felt, 'Why only the *apa-sampradāyas* should have monopoly over the name Prabhupāda?'" (Personal communication)

title thus places ISKCON's founder in very rarefied company. More immediately, the sharing of the appellation "Śrīla Prabhupāda" between guru and disciple intimates an affinity both profound and exceptional between the two personages and their achievements.

Nearly a year after the conversation with Govinda Dāsī, *Back to Godhead* No. 23 (April 18, 1969) devoted a full-page spread under the banner headline "Prabhupada" to herald the honorific.[51] "Prabhupad" makes only a single appearance in No. 25 (September 1969), but after that it rapidly becomes the norm. And in issue No. 27 (undated) "Swamiji" makes its final appearance in the pages of *Back to Godhead*.[52]

We have been describing in chronological sequence the critical steps or stages by which ISKCON took form under Śrīla Prabhupāda's supervision:

> 1. The founding of an institution under the name "International Society for Krishna Consciousness."
> 2. The recognition of that founder with the title "Prabhupāda."

Three more essential elements yet remained to be manifest in the morphology of ISKCON. All of them were finally in place by early 1971. They are:

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[51] The article explains the meanings and import of the name and announces that "[W]e American and European servants of His Divine Grace . . . prefer to address His Grace our Spiritual Master as Prabhupāda, and he has kindly said 'Yes.'" (*BTG* 25:24)

[52] In BTG No. 26 (October, 1969), the article "The Hare Krishna Explosion" by Hayagriva has "Prabhupad" throughout. In BTG No. 28, the main feature, "The Great Soul Who Walks Among Us" (pp. 7-11), is mainly composed of large photographs of Prabhupāda (one full page; two others, one-and-three-fourths of a page). In the accompanying text, he is still "Swamiji." However, in other articles in the issue he is called "Prabhupad" or "Prabhupad A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." In the article "Boston Wedding" (which also features many photographs), his first mention is "His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada," and after he is "Prabhupada" and "His Divine Grace."

3. The further recognition of Prabhupāda with the title "Founder-*Ācārya*."
4. The establishment of the Governing Body Commission.
5. The acquisition of land in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura for ISKCON's "world headquarters," and ceremoniously establishing there the foundation of the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium.

With that, all the core elements of ISKCON will have been set in place by its Founder-*Ācārya*.[53]

Founder-*Ācārya*. This highly consequential title of Śrīla Prabhupāda took some time to gain its proper prominence. When it did, in 1970 the title "*Ācārya*" by itself was deemed both inadequate and offensive. Yet it is evident that Śrīla Prabhupāda knew exactly what he wanted from the beginning.

Nevertheless, just after incorporating ISKCON in 1966, Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal ISKCON letterhead stationery displays his position simply as "Acharya: Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta."[54] Similarly, the line "Acharya: A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami"

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[53] To be sure, other very important hallmarks of ISKCON were also in place by 1971, most notably: the *brahmacārī*, *brahmacāriṇī*, *gṛhastha*, and *sannyāsa* āśramas; the New Vrindavan rural community project; and the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (which was established the day after the GBC). As significant as these are, they do not seem to function as core components, considered in terms of ecclesiology.

[54] A photocopy of this stationery, used for a letter to Hayagriva, can be found in Hayagriva Dasa, *The Hare Krishna Explosion* among the photographs sectioned between pp. 128-129. Beneath "International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Inc.," "Acharya: Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta" appears in bold capitals at the left margin. Directly below that stands the word "Trustees" (also in bold capitals), above nine names in a column below it. His name appeared the same way on letterhead bearing the San Francisco temple address on a letter Prabhupāda wrote in 1967 from that city. In other letters he is "A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, Acarya" or, under his signature, "Acarya International Society for Krishna Consciousness" (VB: Correspondence: Feb. 1, 1968 to Hare Krishna Aggarwal; Aug. 22, 1968 to David Exley). In a long letter of February 5, 1970 to Hanuman Prasad Poddar describing the activities and achievement of ISKCON, he notes ". . . in each banking account my name is there as Acarya."

received public circulation on the famous "Stay High Forever!" flyer of September, 1966."[55] When we examine the first few years of *Back to Godhead*,[56] we find nowhere any formal letter or masthead-style lines displaying Śrīla Prabhupāda's name and position in relation to ISKCON—with two quite striking exceptions.[57] These occur only in the second (September 12, 1966) and the fourth (December 15, 1966) issues—and both of such a common prominence, format, and style as to indicate the guiding hand of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and making their utter absence elsewhere somewhat mysterious.

In the second and fourth issue of *Back to Godhead*, the inside front cover displays a nearly full-page photograph of Śrīla Prabhupāda. (There are two different photos, each capturing Prabhupāda before the sturdy elm in Tompkins Square Park, both from the same article in The East Village Other.) In the space above each photograph stand the words:

HIS DIVINE GRACE

And below:

SWAMI A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA
FOUNDER ACHARYA
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, INC.

After these two early issues, the title of "Founder-*Ācārya*" vanishes until issue number 28 (in late 1969),[58] whereupon it re-emerges as part of a treatment almost identical to the two of late 1966. In the 1969 issue, a photograph of Śrīla Prabhupāda takes up the entire first page, with room only for the caption below:

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[55] See BTG No. 26 (October, 1969) for a photocopy of the flyer.

[56] Scanned copies of these are accessible at www.backtogodhead.in.

[57] The small, boxed *Back to Godhead* masthead in every issue contains "Founder: A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." But "Founder" here has reference to *Back to Godhead*, not ISKCON.

[58] *Back to Godhead* ceased dating its issues with no. 26 (October, 1969).

However, nearly a year passes before we again see such a treatment of Śrīla Prabhupāda's position. Then, with Back to Godhead No. 36 (late in 1970) we find the start of a regular standard presentation of Śrīla Prabhupāda as we are accustomed to seeing it today—and which had its prototype in two of the very first issues of Back to Godhead—a large photograph above his name and position given in full:

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Even though the title of Founder-*Ācārya* took some time to become thus normalized in use, it is clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda had it in mind very early on. The particular presentations of Prabhupāda as Founder-*Ācārya* in those three early issues are certainly few and irregular. Yet all three so closely adhere to a common exemplar—as if directed by an editorial style-sheet—that one can see the guiding hand of Śrīla Prabhupāda behind it.

The grave crisis of 1970—touched on at the outset of this commentary—prompted Śrīla Prabhupāda to undertake powerful remedial actions to fortify his movement.[59] Among them was the firm establishment of standards for the use of "Founder-*Ācārya*" as his title in reference to ISKCON. By so

[59] Certain godbrothers in India, having gained a measure of access to a few of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, had insidiously undermined Prabhupāda's authority and position, leading eventually to a compromise in the faith and allegiance of even some of his leaders. Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to such godbrothers in his purport to CC Ādi. 10.7: "When our disciples similarly wanted to address their spiritual master as Prabhupāda, some foolish people became envious. Not considering the propaganda work of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, simply because these disciples addressed their spiritual master as Prabhupāda they became so envious that they formed a faction along with other such envious persons just to minimize the value of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement."

doing, Prabhupāda intended to impress upon all ISKCON members our need to deepen our understanding of his position and to keep it actively in mind.

What makes this so important? The spiritual power of ISKCON depends on it. That spiritual potency, in the beginning of ISKCON, reposed entirely in Śrīla Prabhupāda. By following his directions, his disciples—even though raw and wavering—became themselves empowered by his potency. With just neophyte devotees acting as his effective agents, by 1971 Śrīla Prabhupāda had spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world: in addition to the increasing number of temples in North America, ISKCON centers had been established in London, Paris, Hamburg, and Tokyo, and the movement was going strong. How was Śrīla Prabhupāda able to accomplish this? By cherishing the order of his spiritual master as his greatest treasure and by serving that order without reservation, Śrīla Prabhupāda had been enabled—though alone and unaided—to pick up the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement exactly where Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had left it off, and then to propel it onward with the same resolute drive that had animated his own spiritual master. Astonishingly, the goal that the unified forces of "a great institution" had concentrated on for nearly two decades, had been realized, in the event, by a single agent of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura acting alone.

Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda had seen for himself—had proven in action—the potency of discipleship, of servitorship. Owing to servitorship alone, it seemed that the single divine energy—*gaura-śakti*—had seamlessly continued to act, without interruption, merely transferring itself from one willing instrument to the next. Now Prabhupāda's challenge was to instill the same art of spiritual servitorship within his own disciples. If successful, they in turn will pass it on, as the living cultural legacy of ISKCON. If his followers can receive and be worthy of his legacy, developing it and improving it just as he had done, keeping cooperative servitorship at the core of all action—then his work as Founder-*Ācārya* will find its fulfillment.

During this same period, Śrīla Prabhupāda complied with a request from some disciples to be able to honor him with a special, or personal, *praṇāma-mantra*.[60] It would normally fall to a competent disciple to compose such a mantra in his gurudeva's honor. Since at the time, no disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda was sufficiently qualified spiritually and linguistically to do so, Prabhupāda was placed in the awkward position of coming up with a mantra himself. As a result, we have been given Prabhupāda's own representation of himself, how he thought of himself, and how he wanted us to remember him as we daily invoked his presence:

> *namas te sārasvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe*
> *nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Sārasvata is the name in this verse by which Śrīla Prabhupāda wishes to be remembered, his name in relation to his spiritual master. *Sārasvata* is his patronymic; it means "son [or disciple] of [Bhaktisiddhānta] Sarasvatī."[61] As Prabhupāda explains (CC *Ādi* 10.84, purport): "As members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we belong to the family, or disciplic succession,

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[60] Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami: "When we had approached Prabhupāda and told him that as his disciples we would like a special prayer which we could recite in his honor, he had composed a verse in which he described his mission" (SS 187). A "personal" mantra, that is, honoring a certain spiritual master for some particular personal characteristic or achievement. The first *praṇāma-mantra* is "generic," that is, suitable being directed to any guru whose name is inserted within the mantra. The date of the new *praṇāma-mantra:* In a letter of April 9, 1970 to Pradyumna Dāsa, Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to it as "the new prayer addition," and proposes a grammatical modification to the Sanskrit.

[61] There is a rule in Sanskrit grammar for the formation of a patronymic or matronymic, that is, a name derived from one's father or mother. In English, common surnames like "Johnson" or "Erickson" were originally patronymics ("John's son"). In Scotland, the prefix "Mac-" or "Mc-" is the sign of a patronymic, "MacDonald" being (originally) Donald's son; in Ireland FitzGerald was Gerald's son. In Russian, "Ivanovitch" is a patronymic. Following the Sanskrit rule, Prabhupāda denoted himself with the name "Sārasvata," the son or servant of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

of Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, and thus we are known as Sārasvatas. Obeisances are therefore offered to the spiritual master as *sārasvata-deva*, or a member of the Sārasvata family . . . .” Thus, his own name in this *praṇāma-mantra* is simply the name of his spiritual master, which, by means of a few grammatical tweaks—changing the first *a* to *ā*, and modifying the word-ending—becomes his own. In this way, “Sārasvata” directs attention to their deep affinity and suggests that achievements of the son—accomplished in his father’s name—belong to the father, his creator and director. In this instance, the son represents the father in the literal sense of the term: to “represent” is to “*re*-present”—to present over again.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *praṇāma-mantra* recognizes him as being the one who spreads (*pracāriṇa*) Lord Caitanya teaching (*gaura-vāṇī*) to the West (*pāścātya-deśa*). His achievement had been the concerted aim of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, which had attained a toehold in Europe in 1933 but nothing further. Had that position become secured—particularly by the construction of a London temple—Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would have gone to the West himself.[62] Circumstantially, his intent seems to have been frustrated. Even so, in the ripeness of time, he had one faithful Sārasvata who fulfilled his heartfelt desire.

The name *sārasvata-deva* indicates that its bearer is the continuation of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in another form. In that form, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura succeeded in fulfilling his heartfelt desire. When his most dedicated servant realized that success was at hand,[63] and that it bore the name and

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[62] *The Harmonist* of July 12, 1935 (*Harm.* 31:521-22) reports that “Her Highness Majarani Indira Devi, Regent Shaeba of Cooch Behar paid a visit to Sree Gaudiya Math, Baghbazar, Calcutta,” where she met with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. During that meeting, the magazine reports: “Her Highness very earnestly enquired about the proposed visit of the Editor [Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura] to Europe for further extension of the propaganda in the West.”

[63] We don’t know the precise time he realized this. In any case, there is no doubt that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s knowledge of the future was not that of ordinary, conditioned persons. In late fall of l965, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat on a park bench and

form of "International Society for Krishna Consciousness," Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted the title "Founder-*Ācārya*." This confident, self-assured act of Śrīla Prabhupāda indicates that he knew very well that this title had been prepared to recognize the crowning success of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in establishing Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a global movement, and that Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had achieved this success through his own Sārasvata.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's *praṇāma-mantra* recognizes two kinds of achievements: widespread propagation of devotional service to the Supreme Lord, and overthrowing nihilism and impersonalism. These were also the aims of the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution under Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and the signature achievements of the *sampradāya-ācāryas* as well.

It is notable that Śrīla Prabhupāda was able to recognize his own achievement, and accept the honors that properly belong to it, without a tinge of pride. It is evident that at a certain time, Śrīla Prabhupāda realized that in spite of all impediments, he would be able to execute his spiritual mater's order. He recognized that he had been empowered. It is a natural characteristic of spiritual psychology, observable in great devotees and saints, that the experience of empowerment is inevitably accompanied by the experience of extreme humility, and the more empowerment bears fruit, the further humility increases. This compact blend of great accomplishment and great humility is beyond the scope of experience of ordinary materialistic persons. They cannot begin to imagine it.

When visible success began to attend upon Śrīla Prabhupāda's efforts, he discounted his own effort, gave credit to others, and was filled with gratitude.

On several memorable occasions, he disclosed his mind in public addresses. For example, speaking to his disciples gathered

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chatted with Paul Ruben, a New York City subway conductor, who recollects (SPL 2:28): "He seemed to know he would have temples filled with devotees. He would look out and say, 'I am not a poor man, I am rich. There are temples and books, they are existing, they are there, but the time is separating us from them.'"

in London to celebrate Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā on August 22, 1973, Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

> Anyone who is connected with our movement, he's not ordinary living being. Actually, he's liberated soul. And I am very much hopeful that my disciples who are now participating today, even if I die, my movement will not stop, I am very much hopeful. . . . My Guru Mahārāja, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, he also attempted to send his disciples to preach Caitanya cult in the Western world. . . . First meeting, perhaps you know, he asked me to preach. So at that time I was young man, only twenty-five years old, and I was also householder. So I should have joined and executed his desire immediately, but due to my ill luck I could not immediately execute his order, but it was in my heart that it is to be done. So better late than never, I executed his order at the age of seventy years, not at the age of twenty-five. So actually I wasted so much time, I can understand that. . . . The message was there when I was twenty-five years old, but I began at the age of seventy years. But I did not forget the message. Otherwise, how could I do? That was, that is a fact. I was simply finding out the opportunity, how to do it. So anyway, although I began very late, at the age of seventy years, so by the help of my disciples this movement is gaining ground and is spreading all over the world. So therefore I have to thank you. It is all due to you. It is not my credit, but it is your credit that you are helping me in executing the order of my Guru Mahārāja.

Later that year in Los Angeles, Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed similar thoughts, with more visible emotion, on the Disappearance Day of his spiritual master (VB: Lecture, Dec. 31, 1973):

> So in this way, gradually, I became attached to these Gauḍīya Matha activities, and by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, my business also was not going very well. [laughs] Yes. Kṛṣṇa says *yasyāham anughṛṇāmi hariṣye tad-dhanaṁ śanaiḥ*. If somebody wants to be actually devotee of Kṛṣṇa, at the

same time, keeps his material attachment, then Kṛṣṇa's business is He takes away everything material, so that cent percent he becomes, I mean to say, dependent on Kṛṣṇa. So that actually happened to my life. I was obliged to come to this movement to take up this very seriously.

And I was dreaming that: "Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is calling me, 'Please come out with me!'" [pause] So I was sometimes horrified, "Oh, what is this? I have give up my family life? Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is calling me? I have to take *sannyāsa*?" Oh, I was horrified. But I saw several times, calling me. So anyway, it is by his grace I was forced to give up my family life, my so-called business life. And he brought me some way or other in preaching his gospel.

So this is a memorable day. What he desired, I am trying little bit, and you are all helping me. So I have to thank you more. You are actually representative of my Guru Mahārāja [begins to cry] because you are helping me in executing the order of my Guru Mahārāja. . . .

When appreciative Indians began praising Śrīla Prabhupāda as a magician or miracle-maker, he denied having any special powers. Here is his account given in Bombay on January 9, 1973:

Yes, we should not be very much proud that "I have created wonderful." Why? . . . Sometimes people, they give me so much honor: "Swamijī, you have created wonderful." I do not feel that I have created wonderful. What I have done? I say that I'm not a magician, I do not know how to create wonderful. I have simply presenting *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is, that's all. If there is any credit, this is only credit. Anyone can do it. The *Bhagavad-gītā* is there, and anyone can present *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is. So it will act wonderful. I am not a magician. I do not know the tricks of magic and the *yoga-siddhi*. . . . So my only credit is, I do not want to mix with this pure *Bhagavad-gītā* teaching, any rascaldom, that's all. That is my credit. And whatever little miracle has been done, only on this principle. That's all.

Governing Body Commission. The upheaval of 1970 in ISKCON provided the occasion for Śrīla Prabhupāda to satisfy another unfulfilled desire of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura: the formation of a governing body to manage the whole institution. This instruction was among the final directions imparted by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura to his disciples in his last days.[64] Disobedience to this order, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda, led to the disintegration of the Gauḍīya Maṭha (CC *Ādi* 12.8, purport):

> In the beginning, during the presence of Oṁ Viṣṇupāda Paramahaṁsa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, 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 *ācārya*. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of *ācārya*, and they split into two factions [the Calcutta "Gauḍīya Mission" and the Mayapura "Gauḍīya Maṭha"] over who the next *ācārya* would be. Consequently, both factions were asāra, 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 Gauḍīya Maṭha, the two unauthorized factions began litigation that is still going on after forty years with no decision.
>
> Therefore, we do not belong to any faction. But because the two parties, busy dividing the material assets

[64] This instruction was set down on December 31, 1936 in the recorded minutes of his will. The original document is preserved at the Bhaktivedanta Research Center in Kolkata. For a photocopy, see MHP 289.

> of the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution, stopped the preaching work, we took up the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura to preach the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world, under the protection of all the predecessor *ācāryas*, and we find that our humble attempt has been successful.
>
> We followed the principles especially explained by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse beginning *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* [BG 2.41]. According to this instruction of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, it is the duty of a disciple to follow strictly the orders of his spiritual master. The secret of success in advancement in spiritual life is the firm faith of the disciple in the orders of his spiritual master. . . . . One must judge every action by its result. The members of the self-appointed *ācārya*'s party who occupied the property of the Gauḍīya Maṭha are satisfied, but they could make no progress in preaching. Therefore by the result of their actions one should know that they are *asāra*, or useless, whereas the success of the ISKCON party, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which strictly follows guru and Gaurāṅga, is increasing daily all over the world.

The establishment of the Governing Body Commission on July 28, 1970 was Śrīla Prabhupāda's second potent counter-measure against the imp of disunity let loose in ISKCON. The GBC is the type of institution—a committee[65]—that both demands and fosters cooperation. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's leaders failed to realize such a governing board. Had the Gauḍīya Maṭha not been dismembered by their disobedience, there would have been many disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura working together in the West. In the event, Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived alone, and alone he resuscitated the Krishna Consciousness movement. When godbrothers actively

[65] Etymologically, the word goes back to the Latin *committere*, "to unite, connect."

or passively spurned cooperation, he was left no alternative but to be the single *ācārya* at the head of ISKCON.

Yet his spiritual master himself had asked for a governing board to succeed him at the head of his institution. Śrīla Prabhupāda took this request to heart. Here was another desire of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura left unsatisfied, and Śrīla Prabhupāda, the faithful Sārasvata, undertook to satisfy him: He would establish such a board, oversee its development, and have it ready to act as his successor at the head of ISKCON.

It is customary in India for an *ācārya* to leave his institution to his chosen successor as a legacy in his will. The action Śrīla Prabhupāda took in 1970—establishing the GBC— allowed him in 1977 to set this down as the first provision of his "Declaration of Will": "The Governing Body Commission (GBC) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness." By thus establishing the GBC and leaving it as his chosen successor at the head of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda insured that the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would continue to work efficaciously in the world and bear fruit.

The final stage in Śrīla Prabhupāda's installation of the essential components in ISKCON's spiritual morphology was also initiated around this time. After great difficulty and many setbacks, mainly occasioned by passive and active opposition of godbrothers,[66] Śrīla Prabhupāda was able to purchase land in Māyāpura for ISKCON, and he quickly revealed his plans

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[66] Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami relates (SPL 4:95): "Though sometimes ignorant, his disciples, he knew, were not malicious. Yet these letters from India carried a spiritual disease transmitted by several of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers to his disciples there. Prabhupāda had already been troubled when some of his Godbrothers had refused to help him secure land in Māyāpur, the birthplace of Lord Caitanya. Although he had asked them to help his inexperienced disciples purchase land, they had not complied. In fact, some of them had worked against him. Prabhupāda had written to one of his Godbrothers, 'I am so sorry to learn that there is a sort of conspiracy by some of our Godbrothers as not to give me a place at Māyāpur.'"

for a monumental temple there. Writing to Govinda Dāsī from Calcutta (May 28, 1971), he said:

> You will be glad to learn that we have purchased about five acres of land in Mayapur, the birthsite of Lord Caitanya and we have proposed to hold a nice festival there from Janmastami day for two weeks. At that time the foundation stone [for the temple] will be set down. I wish that all our leading disciples come to India at that time. There are 50 branches, so at least one from each branch should attend the function . . . .

By performing the ceremony for establishing the temple's foundation, Śrīla Prabhupāda committed himself to the completion of the structure. As it turned out, the foundation-laying itself was delayed until Gaura Pūrṇimā of 1972, and in the ensuing years many more vicissitudes sent ISKCON leaders repeatedly back to the drawing board. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda's own commitment, established in 1972 as if a vow, has proved to contain a potency that has driven the concerted effort over, under, around and through all impediments, and the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium rises on the alluvial soil of Antardvīpa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave high priority to acquiring land in Māyāpura for ISKCON's "world headquarters" and constructing on it an extraordinary temple. Gradually, Śrīla Prabhupāda's leaders began to grasp its importance for him. For example (SPL 5:9):

> During this visit to Calcutta [November, 1971], Prabhupāda had also spoken of his plans for Māyāpur. Nara-Nārāyaṇa had built a scale model of the building ISKCON would construct on the newly acquired property, and Prabhupāda had shown it to all his guests and had asked them to help. Seeing Prabhupāda's absorption in this project, Girirāja had volunteered to help in any way required. "It seems the two things you want most," Girirāja had said, "are for the books to be distributed and to build a temple at Māyāpur."
>
> "Yes," Prabhupāda had said, smiling. "Yes, thank you."

We gain a deeper grasp of Śrīla Prabhupāda's priority when we understand this temple in light of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ecclesiology that lay, as we have seen, at the foundation of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's institution. We have already noted that Śrīla Prabhupāda constructed ISKCON on the basis of that same ecclesiology. In the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution, the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura is the central or "parent" temple and all others are its branches: "The distinction between the Gaudiya Math [in Calcutta] and Sri Chaitanya Math is all analogous to that between one lamp lighted by another," *The Harmonist* article explains (with an allusion to *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.46). The central temple, being located in Māyāpura, the descended spiritual realm (Śvetadvīpa), is really the visible mundane complement or counterpart of its transcendentally located original, where the Lord and the *ācārya* dwell eternally together. The diverse branches are places for training aspirants for service in the place of the *ācārya* in the transcendent Māyāpura. The central or parent temple of the institution, being thus located on the border, as it were, between two realms, serves as a kind of gateway. Its associated branches, though dispersed further throughout the mundane realm, by virtue of their links with the center also function in themselves as gateways.

Situated at the center, the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha teaches by its very architecture with its embellishments and appurtenances, the spiritual science which sets forth the unified principle that make such a gateway possible: *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. The paved *parikramā* path around the central dome brings the circumambulating visitor around to encounter, one after another, the forms of the four Vaiṣṇava Founder-*Ācāryas*, each within his own shrine set into the outward body of the dome. They are spaced evenly around the base of the dome, but the structure itself draws them together around Śrī Caitanya Maṭha.

Each of these Founder-*Ācāryas* propounded a specific teaching concerning the relationship between the Lord and his energies. While each doctrine is sound, it is also incomplete, asserts Niśikānta Sānyāl in *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*. But the

teaching of Lord Caitanya—formalized as *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*—"reconciles, harmonizes and perfects them" (SKC 164). The temple embodies this Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teaching and so presents the case—so thoroughly advanced in *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*—that Mahāprabhu, the *yuga-avatāra*, offers the consummation and the fulfillment of theism.

The ISKCON Temple of the Vedic Planetarium presents the same teaching portrayed by the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in a more detailed and more comprehensive manner. On a cosmological scale, it maps, models, and illustrates the realized truth of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva:* that nothing is different from Kṛṣṇa, yet Kṛṣṇa is different from everything.[67] Within the main dome of the temple we see the cosmos displayed as it discloses itself to those who experience it with unoccluded perception: as pervaded by and connected to Kṛṣṇa as the Lord's own potencies. The temple thus counters the two kinds of widespread false perception, both of which separate Kṛṣṇa from His energies. One is the way of monism or impersonalism (*nirviśeṣa-vāda*), which denies the reality of the divine energies and relegates both the personality of Godhead and the creation to illusion. The other is the way of materialism or nihilism (*śūnya-vāda*), which recognizes only the energies, which have no origin or foundation.

Displaying the connections between the Lord and the creation, the temple can provide a kind of map of the pathway to divinity (together with the various way stations, detours, and diversions). Set into the inner wall of the dome, ascending concentric galleries offer the visitor a sequence of artistically rendered representations of the regions encountered on the cosmic journey by Gopa-kumāra, passing through multiple material and spiritual realms to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, as depicted by Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta*. The

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[67] Two memorable, aphoristic formulations of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* by Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Nothing is different from the Supreme. But the Supreme is always different from everything" (BG 18.78, purport). And: "In a sense, there is nothing but Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and yet nothing is Śrī Kṛṣṇa save and except His primeval personality" (CC Ādi 1.51, purport).

temple thus previews the ultimate ascent that draws all sentient life onward.

It is the last of the five steps by Śrīla Prabhupāda, all accomplished by 1972, that puts all core components of ISKCON in place. The temple completes the whole spiritual structure of the visible ISKCON. The centers and temples scattered throughout the world are joined together in a network that converges on the center at Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. Like the widely spread roots of a tree that draw water to the central trunk, Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON brings conditioned souls to Māyāpura, where the central temple opens a gateway to the vertical dimension, that, like a tree-trunk, soars upward to branch out luxuriantly in the spiritual sky.

This is the work of a Founder-*Ācārya*. A Founder-*Ācārya* opens an avenue that leads through the cosmos and crosses over into transcendence. Having laid out the illustrious path—from the beginning root tip to ending leaf tip—the Founder-*Ācārya* makes provision for its regular maintenance and for the trained guides who will direct, protect, and encourage those who traverse it. He continuously oversees its functioning as long as there are those who act under his direction. In a sense, this lane to the land of the living is identical with its own craftsman. Naming his construction ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda engineered it so that this entirely spiritual artifact should be manifest not only to the wise (who recognize what they see), but even to the foolish (who cannot). Especially for them, he assembled a vast array of visible entrances to the path, spread in a network covering the world. All converge on the center in Antardvīpa, where the map of the luminous path—in cosmological cartography—is marvelously displayed, and each step of the journey into transcendence finely depicted. Thus the temple discloses itself as a cosmic portal or gateway leading through the heavens and into the eternal realms of Kṛṣṇa.[68]

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[68] This "portal" is, in truth, an outward manifestation of the heart of Śrīla Prabhupāda. That heart is large and magnanimous, and so is its manifestation in a path that girdles the world and a central temple that embraces the universe and

In the ISKCON temples and centers, Śrīla Prabhupāda's specially placed *mūrtis* indicate his guardianship over the entranceways onto the path. At their convergence point in Navadvīpa-dhāma, Śrīla Prabhupāda's presiding presence over all of earthly ISKCON is proclaimed by his radiant form of gold in his *puṣpa-samādhi*; from that coign of vantage he surveys the entrance of the great temple, gateway to the ultimate passage. And then, at the passage's terminus in Śvetadvīpa, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself presides to welcome and gather the new arrivals into the everlasting transcendent ISKCON of *gaura-līlā*.[69] In this way, Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual thoroughfare conveys the recovered and rescued *jīvas* safely to the highest destination.

Our Founder-*Ācārya* marked the beginning of his project with his first book, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, and he continued his effort through the writing, printing and distributing of books and the simultaneous construction of a worldwide institution. His handiwork continues and now is at last crowned with its consolidating apex, the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium, which unifies both *Bhāgavatam* and Bhāgavata, book and person. It marks the core and center of the Founder-*Ācārya*'s creation, and it indicates the location of the true world-axis at sacred Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, the descended spiritual realm.

The "four Founder-*Acharyas* of the Iron Age" each formulated an explication of *Vedānta* that recovered the theistic, Vaiṣṇava understanding of Vedavyāsa, and each energetically taught it and trained others to do so. In this way the illusive facade of impersonalism was dismantled, and the veridical Vedic *siddhānta* became propagated throughout India. In Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's depiction, the four were preparing the way for the *yuga-avatāra* Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who was to make the most highly confidential revelation of the *Vedas* open and

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beyond. All this resided in Śrīla Prabhupāda's heart when he walked alone on the chilled concrete of Manhattan in 1966. Now, it is becoming hugely manifest to bestow its benediction munificently.

[69] See VB letter to Tusta Krsna, 14 December, 1972: "We shall have another ISKCON there [in the spiritual sky}."

accessible to all through *saṅkīrtana*. Mahāprabhu inspired his closest associates to systematically formulate his teaching as *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, which included and completed the systems of the Founder-*Ācāryas*. These intimate associates of Mahāprabhu bore the special title of "Prabhupāda."

Now two more followers of Mahāprabhu have appeared who also bear the title "Prabhupāda"—Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda and A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda. The first practically formulated the strategy and tactics for systematic worldwide propagation of Mahāprabhu's movement; the second carried his plan to completion. Within the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution, the title "Founder-*Ācārya*" had been prepared for Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda to assume, but circumstantially he could not complete his plans himself and establish Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western countries. In his name, however, A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, having understood the heart of his spiritual master, picked up where Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura left off and in twelve eventful years established the *yuga-dharma* throughout the world. In this way, the compassionate efforts of the four Founder-*Ācāryas* were, by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his instruments, expanded and completed by one more who bears that title.

The extraordinary achievements of Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly make him worthy of the title, but it does not, in this case, imply that he originated a "new *sampradāya*." By faithfully transmitting the teachings and practices as he received them in the Gauḍīya-*sampradāya*, he continued the tradition. Nevertheless, Śrīla Prabhupāda transmitted his received tradition with a distinct and decisive articulation, uniquely his own, as the fruit of his realized knowledge. Consequently, under his direction the Gauḍīya-*sampradāya*, in his refreshed and revitalized reiteration, has been able to extend beyond its natal ground, to sink down roots around the globe, and so to flourish everywhere.

The Gauḍīya-*sampradāya* appears historically as a branch of the Brahmā-Madhva-*sampradāya* because Lord Caitanya—in

reality the one fountainhead of all four *sampradāyas*—appeared as a devotee (*bhakta-rūpa*). As such, He sought and accepted proper Vaiṣṇava initiation into one of the four authorized *sampradāyas*. However, His teaching, systematized and expounded by the Six Gosvāmīs, were so clearly distinct from the standard teaching of the Madhvite community into which He was initiated, that the followers of Mahāprabhu naturally became recognized as a distinct community or *sampradāya*. Challenged, as such, to establish its *bona fides*, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa successfully responded by producing a Gauḍīya-vaiṣṇava commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the *Govinda-bhāṣya*. Thus there was formal acknowledgment of the Gauḍīya-*sampradāya* as distinct from the others early in the eighteenth century.

Even so, the Gauḍīya-*sampradāya* has a special status, and we cannot regard it simply as a new *sampradāya*, taking its place as one more among many. Rather, the Gauḍīya-*sampradāya*, correctly understood, should be recognized as the unified completion and fulfillment of the four earlier *sampradāyas* of Kali-yuga. Such is the understanding propounded by the realization—and revelation—of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, documented by him in his visionary *Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma-māhātmya* of 1890. There Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura offers a detailed account—as of an eyewitness—of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī performing (soon after the disappearance of Lord Caitanya) *navadvīpa-parikramā* under the guidance of Prabhu Nityānanda. In the course of their excursion, Nityānanda Prabhu relates to Śrī Jīva how each of the four Founder-*Ācāryas* of Kali-yuga, while themselves on pilgrimage to Jagannātha Purī or Navadvīpa, is favored with a confidential revelation of the future advent of the *yuga-avatāra*.[70] Binding them to secrecy, Lord Caitanya uplifts and inspires each of them to work so as to prepare the way for His future advent. For example, the Lord appears in a dream to Madhvācārya and tells him (NDM 68):

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[70] The Lord similarly appears to Śaṅkarācārya, acknowledges him as "My servant," and bids him: "Do not contaminate the inhabitants of Navadvīpa." Śaṅkara goes away with "devotion instilled in his heart"(NDM 68-9).

> Everyone knows you are my eternal servant. When I appear in Navadvīpa, I will accept your sampradāya. Now, go everywhere and carefully uproot all the false scriptures of the māyāvādīs. Reveal the glories to worshiping the Deity of the Lord. Later, I will broadcast your pure teachings.

When Lord Caitanya appears to Nimbāditya (or Nimbārka), the Lord discloses how in the future He will unveil a consummate teaching that will include, sublate, unify, and complete the teaching of each of the four Founder-*Ācāryas* (NDM 73):

> Later, when I begin the *saṅkīrtana* movement, I Myself will preach the essence of the four Vaiṣṇava philosophies. From Madhva I will receive two essential items: his complete defeat of the Māyāvāda philosophy, and his service to the Deity of Kṛṣṇa, accepting the Deity as an eternal spiritual being. From Rāmānuja I will accept two great teachings: the concept of *bhakti* unpolluted by *karma* and *jñāna*, and service to the devotees. From Viṣṇusvāmī's teachings I will accept two main elements: the sentiment of excusive dependence on Kṛṣṇa, and the path of *rāga-bhakti*. And from you I will receive two excellent principles: the necessity of taking shelter of Rādhā, and the high esteem for the *gopīs*' love of Kṛṣṇa.

In conclusion, the advent of Lord Caitanya is itself the consummation of the four *sampradāyas*. That consummation heralds a new beginning, with Mahāprabhu as the originator of an unprecedentedly magnanimous revelation, with the Six Gosvāmīs as the first receivers and transmitters of that revelation, and with Śrīla Prabhupāda as the *ācārya* who founded and developed a global community of *kṛṣṇa-bhaktas*, who christened that community as the "International Society for Krishna Consciousness," who energized the society so engendered with the life-force of his realized knowledge, and who established its foremost temple at its world headquarters in Antardvīpa, the descended Śvetadvīpa, from which his society

conveys the revelation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya to the world, and the world back to Him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's realized knowledge. It is our good fortune that Śrīla Prabhupāda was quite open in sharing with us how he gained his realized knowledge and how that knowledge enabled him to fulfill the desire of his spiritual master and establish Lord Caitanya's movement as a global venture. Śrīla Prabhupāda offered one remarkable disclosure in 1968 at the temple in Los Angeles, occasioned by the observance of the disappearance of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Looking at the rows of young American faces lifted up to him, Śrīla Prabhupāda wondered out loud:

> I was born in a different family; my Guru Mahārāja was born in a different family. Who knew that I will come to his protection? Who knew that I would come in America? Who knew that you American boys will come to me? These are all Kṛṣṇa's arrangement. We cannot understand how things are taking place.

But then, Śrīla Prabhupāda goes on to tell how his presence that day in Los Angeles came about.

> In 1936—today is ninth December, 1968—that means thirty-two years ago, in Bombay, I was then doing some business: All of a sudden—perhaps on this date, sometimes between ninth or tenth of December (at that time, Guru Mahārāja was indisposed little, and he was staying at Jagannātha Purī, on the seashore)—so, I wrote him a letter: "My dear master, your other disciples—*brahmacārī*, *sannyāsī*—they are rendering you direct service. And I am a householder: I cannot live with you, I cannot serve you nicely. So I do not know. How can I serve you?" Simply an idea: I was thinking of serving him, "How can I serve him seriously?"

The seed from which all else grew was "simply an idea." Discontent with his occupation in business, feeling himself

incapacitated by the obligations of his *āśrama*, on an impulse ("all of a sudden") Prabhupāda wrote his Guru Mahārāja with a plea, a cry from the heart. He felt himself locked in a position which made proper service impossible, yet still the desire to do it was there. So he confessed his desire and his frustration to his spiritual master.

Prabhupāda continues:

> So the reply was dated 13 December, 1936. In that letter he wrote, "My dear such and such, I am very glad to receive your letter. I think you should try to push our movement in English." That was his writing. "And that will do good to you and to the people who will help you." That was his instruction. And then in 1936, on the thirty-first of December—that means just after writing this letter a fortnight before his departure—he passed away. But I took that order of my spiritual master very seriously, but I did not think that I'll have to do such and such thing. I was at that time a householder. But this is the arrangement of Kṛṣṇa. If we strictly try to serve the spiritual master, his order, then Kṛṣṇa will give us all facilities. That is the secret. Although there was no possibility—I never thought—.

It was a startling, an unexpected, an incongruous, an entirely *improbable* order. "Push on our movement in English": that was, in fact, the cutting edge of the Gauḍīya Maṭha's preaching. It meant: Go to the West—to Europe, to America. It was a well-known order, already conveyed to many leaders, *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs*, in the Gauḍīya Maṭha. But now the recipient was a householder doing business in Bombay, entangled in domestic and commercial matters, helping out the temple as much as he could. He was, as we say today, a "congregational member." Prabhupāda confesses that he could not envision any concrete circumstances in which it could be realized. ("I did not think that I'll have to do such and such thing," "Although there was no possibility—I never thought—".) Nevertheless, he

took it "very seriously." At the same time, it was the *last direct communication* he received from his spiritual master. That gave it even more weight. (And he surely remembered this order echoed the request he received on his very first meeting with Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, fourteen years previously.) So he understood he must take it seriously, even though he was initially baffled: How in the world will it happen? As it turns out, it happened by "the arrangement of Kṛṣṇa."

Yet something more is still required. For what prompts Kṛṣṇa to make such an arrangement? The seriousness of the disciple. "If we strictly try to serve the spiritual master, his order, then Kṛṣṇa will give us all facilities. That is the secret."[71] This is Śrīla Prabhupāda's "realized knowledge."

Now Prabhupāda goes to tell us how—again by Kṛṣṇa's arrangement—he learned this secret:

> Although there was no possibility—I never thought—but I took it little seriously by studying a commentary by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura on the Bhagavad-gītā. In the Bhagavad-gītā there is the verse, *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana*. In connection with that verse, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura gives his commentary that we should take up the words from the spiritual master as our life and soul. We should try to carry out the instruction, the specific instruction of

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[71] In a conversation with Rāmeśvara (VB: Jan. 13, 1977, Allahabad), Prabhupāda explains how he received "all facilities": "I started my activities when I was seventy years old. So they [his Godbrothers] thought, 'This man is gṛhastha. He is embarrassed with family life. What he'll do?' (laughs) That was their impression. But I never neglected. Guru Mahārāja told me. I was simply thinking, 'How to do it? How to do it?' I thought, 'Let me become a rich businessman. The money will be required.' That was my thought. But Guru Mahārāja was asking me, 'You give up this. I'll give you money.' That I could not understand. I was planning. My plan was not wrong. But I was thinking 'The money required, so let me earn some money. Then I shall begin.' And Guru Mahārāja said, 'You give up this money-earning endeavor. You come completely. I'll give you money.' I can understand now. But my desire was there. Therefore he guided me."

> the spiritual master, very rigidly, without caring for our personal benefit or loss.

Here is the immediate source of Prabhupāda's inspiration: the realization he received from reading Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.41. It was the key that unlocked the order of his spiritual master. It became the foundation of his life and achievement, the "only secret" of his success. Again and again, Prabhupāda directly and indirectly refers to this defining moment of his life,[72] when he was granted the realization to make the total commitment that, come what may, he would make the order of his spiritual master his life and soul. Because of that commitment alone, Kṛṣṇa has brought him to America and given him success:

> So I tried a little bit in that spirit. So he has given me all facilities to serve him. Things have come to this stage, that in this old age I have come to your country, and you are also taking this movement seriously, trying to understand it. We have got some books now. So there is little foothold of this movement.

Now Prabhupāda requests his own disciples to enact the same commitment to his order that he has evinced to that of his Guru Mahārāja:

> So on this occasion of my spiritual master's departure, as I am trying to execute his will, similarly, I shall also

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[72] One of many examples: "Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states in his Bhagavad-gītā commentary on the verse *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. Simply by following on that line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead. . . . [I]f one sticks to the principles enunciated by the spiritual master, somehow or other he is in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since the Lord is in the heart, He can advise a sincere disciple from within. . . . In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by *vāṇī* or *vapuḥ*. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (SB 4.28.51, purport).

> request you to execute the same order through my will. I am an old man, I can also pass away at any moment. That is nature's law. Nobody can check it. So that is not very astonishing, but my appeal to you on this auspicious day of the departure of my Guru Mahārāja, that at least to some extent you have understood the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. You should try to push it on.

"Execute his will" is a play on words. The expression means, of course, to carry out the order of some one, but it is also the formal legal term to refer to the process by which a person's assets become those of his heirs. By his commitment to execute Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's will, Śrīla Prabhupāda inherited from him his specific potency to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. On this occasion Śrīla Prabhupāda is now making his will: "I shall also request you to execute the same order through my will. I am an old man." By his will, Prabhupāda has made us his heirs. He imparts, as his legacy, the instructions that, if accepted, transfers to us the same potency to deliver people to the shelter of Kṛṣṇa's feet.

"I shall also request you to execute the same order through my will:" This is an extraordinary moment; it is the act of transmission of spiritual potency, by which we all can become empowered just as Śrīla Prabhupāda himself became empowered.

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us what "that same order" is:

> . . . . at least to some extent you have understood the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. You should try to push it on. People are suffering for want of this consciousness. As we daily pray about devotees:
>
> *vāñchā-kalpatarubhyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca*
> *patitānāṁ pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*
>
> A Vaiṣṇava, or devotee of Lord, his life is dedicated for the benefit of the people. You know—most of you belong to Christian community—how Lord Jesus Christ, he said that for your sinful activities he has sacrificed himself. That is the determination of devotee of the Lord. They don't care for personal comforts. Because they love Kṛṣṇa

> or God, therefore they love all living entities because all living entities are in relationship with Kṛṣṇa. So similarly you should learn. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement means to become Vaiṣṇava and feel for the suffering humanity.

The order he received in the form "push on our movement in English" is now retransmitted to us in the form "become Vaiṣṇavas and feel for the suffering of humanity."

Śrīla Prabhupāda took this to heart, as the song instructs:

> guru-*mukha-padma-vākya, cittete kariyā aikya,*
> *āra nā kariha mane āśā*

"Make the words from the lotus mouth of Śrī Gurudeva one with your heart; aspire for nothing else."

The achievement of Śrīla Prabhupāda is proof of the potency of these instructions. Many others had received the same order from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but in the event, the demonstration of *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhi* was his alone.

Hence, Prabhupāda founded a new organization that, as a whole and in its every part, would embody and develop that realization—a realization that manifests itself as an unwavering, indefatigable commitment to deliver pure love of God to suffering humanity everywhere.

Suffering humanity. The acute feeling for human suffering—so prominent in Śrīla Prabhupāda's inheritance from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—possesses a natural ramification: an urgent need to muster and deploy all resources together—material, personnel, finances, infrastructure, organization—to deliver as much relief as possible in the shortest possible time. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's innovation was to create a unified, coordinated institution that could accomplish this. When the voluntary service of devotees was rationally organized and coordinated, its effective energy, thus consolidated and concentrated, became hugely multiplied.

The institution that would be able to act on this commitment with united force over large spans of space and time needs a unique form. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī therefore called for an organization in which the ultimate authority would reside not in the person of a single autocratic *ācārya* but rather in a board of directors, which he called the "Governing Body Commission." In the event, the Gauḍīya Maṭha failed to realize this structure, and so, Prabhupāda said, became "useless."

A board of directors. A board of directors is a modern Western institution for joint management and oversight. Śrīla Prabhupāda put into place the standard, generally familiar, elements of such an organization: the annual general meeting, resolutions adopted by a majority of the voting members, following rules of formal parliamentary procedure (as given in Robert's Rule of Order), the adopted resolution recorded into a minutes book by the secretary, and so on.

The "single autocratic *ācārya*" exemplifies an older, more basic, and perhaps more instinctively natural, form of organization. It has, of course, become a standard arrangement in Indian culture, developing originally out of, say, a *sannyāsī* and his *brahmacārī* students.

When over time institutions grow up around a single powerful, charismatic teacher or leader, a result of the gradual accumulation of followers, land, temples, housing, and wealthy patronage, then the person at the top needs to be spiritually advanced in order not to fall victim to the temptations of power, money, fame, and the like. At the same time, the prospect of controlling and enjoying such assets may attract precisely the wrong kind of person—who must of course feign indifference to such things. In these cases, hypocrisy, faultfinding, backstabbing, underhanded dealing, etc., may become endemic, and institutions tend toward disintegration.

The advantage of a governing board is that power is more dispersed, and the members act to check and balance each

other. The institution is inherently more stable: If at some time there is no single outstanding charismatic leader, the institution continues. On the other hand, the existence of two or more supremely qualified leaders can be smoothly accommodated. With a governing board they become an asset—the more the merrier. But if there is a single head, two or more highly qualified leaders will leave all but one under-engaged or unfulfilled, a condition that will foster schisms.

Thus a governing board is more stable, stronger and far more resilient than a single *ācārya*. But what if there are a number of exceptionally empowered—let's call them "self-effulgent"—*ācāryas* on that board? Will they pull things apart? No: If they are indeed elevated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then they will be certain to exemplify the principle of cooperative service at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda and make the governing board all the stronger.

Our Central Challenge

Śrīla Prabhupāda established such a structure for ISKCON, putting the Governing Body Commission in place in 1970 and overseeing its gradual articulation and development. Stating that he wanted there to be "hundreds and thousands of spiritual masters" within ISKCON, he implied that the normative guru-disciple relationship would be perpetuated within the unified institution under the direction of the GBC. In such an organization, many gurus would be able to act with concerted force, operating together with other leaders and managers in collegial accord.

Hundreds and thousands of spiritual masters. In New York on August 17, 1966, while speaking on *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34-38, Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

> So there is no bar for anyone, that one cannot become the spiritual master. Everyone can become spiritual master, provided he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa. . . . This is the

> science of Kṛṣṇa, this *Bhagavad-gītā*. If anyone knows perfectly, then he becomes the spiritual master. . . . So we require hundreds and thousands of spiritual masters who has understood this Kṛṣṇa science. And preach all over the world. . . . . Therefore we have formed this society and we invite all sincere souls to take part in the society and become a spiritual master, and preach this science all over the world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained his expectation to Tuṣṭa-kṛṣṇa (VB: Correspondence, Dec. 2, 1975):

> Every student is expected to become Acarya. Acarya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples. . . .
>
> Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your Spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda stated on these and many other occasions the need of huge numbers of gurus, and his desire that "every student" help meet that need. Since he very much wanted his disciples and followers to remain within ISKCON, he envisioned a vast increase in spiritual and material force generated by the efficiencies and mutual reinforcements of cooperative service. By working and preaching together in a concerted, organized fashion, our internal and external power become far more than the sum of that of the individual parts.

After all, our practice is *saṅkīrtana*, not just *kīrtana*, and the full import of the prefix *saṁ*—indicating not only union, but also thoroughness, intensity and completeness—needs realization.

Yet as long as Prabhupāda was present as the sole *ācārya* and *dīkṣā* guru, the structure necessarily remained in embryonic form, a child still in the womb of its mother, its form and function necessarily not fully developed. During Prabhupāda's manifest presence, by the very nature of the situation, the GBC clearly could not assume its full role as the "ultimate managing authority," and Prabhupāda remained the only guru. Therefore the completed product of Prabhupāda's work had to await its time to be manifest.

Consequently, Prabhupāda has left to us the task, after his departure, of fully articulating the form and functions of ISKCON for effective action in the world. One central challenge is to integrate the guru-disciple relationship—which carries its own proper demand for deep loyalty and commitment to the person of the guru—within a larger society that demands, in a certain sense, a higher, all-encompassing, loyalty. That loyalty is our common fidelity to our Founder-*Ācārya* Śrīla Prabhupāda, a loyalty proven in practice by our cooperation with each other, within the structure he bequeathed us, to fulfill his deepest desire.

Our cooperation with each other. The foundation of cooperation is love. "A whole society is carrying my order, not because I am superior person," said Śrīla Prabhupāda.

> There is love. Without love, you cannot do so. You have got some bit of love for me, therefore you carry my order. Otherwise it is not possible. And I cannot also. You are foreigners, you are Americans; I came from another country. I have no [bank] account. I cannot also order you: "You must do it, otherwise I will chastise you." Because there is love. It is a connection of love. I can also become bold enough to chastise you, but you also, in whatever condition you carry my order due to the basic principle is love. And our whole philosophy is love.[73]

[73] VB: Lectures: Philosophy Discussion: Discussion with Śyāmasundara: Arthur Schopenhauer.

On May 23, 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda made a well-know statement about the test of our love.

As recorded by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami:

> Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized, "Your love for me will be tested how after my departure you maintain this institution. We have glamour and people are feeling our weight. This should be maintained. Not like Gauḍīya Math. After Guru Mahārāja's departure so many *ācaryās* came up."[74]

Bhakti Charu Swami was present when Śrīla Prabhupāda made this statement. He recalls:

> When Srila Prabhupada was in Vrindavan during his last days, Tamal Krsna Maharaja used to read out loud the letters that devotees wrote to Srila Prabhupada, and His Divine Grace used to dictate his replies, and sometimes he also used to make some comments. Once one devotee wrote how he wanted to offer his longevity to Srila Prabhupada so that he could continue to be with us on this planet. It was a very sweet letter, steeped with emotion. However, Srila Prabhupada reacted in a rather unusual way and commented that our real love for him would be shown by how we cooperate with each other to continue his mission.
>
> That incident left a very deep impression in my heart, and I became aware that the best way to show my love for Srila Prabhupada is through my cooperation with the

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[74] (TKG 45) In *Śrīla Prabhupāda-Līlāmṛta*, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami records a slightly variant version: "'Your love for me,' said Śrīla Prabhupāda, 'will be shown by how much you cooperate to keep this institution together after I am gone'" (SPL 6:313). Regarding the difference between the two versions, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami states: "I heard it from Tamala Krsna Maharaja and wrote it down exactly as he told me. Tamala Krsna Maharaja has written the statement in TKG's Diary with a slightly different sentence structure but the meaning is the same." Posted by Badrinārāyaṇa Dāsa on the electronic forum GBC.Discussions@pamho.net on June 21, 2013.

> devotees of ISKCON who are serving His Divine Grace so sincerely to continue his mission.[75]

In his final days, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked from us a more compelling proof of love than heartfelt expressions, however sincere. This, he says, will convince him: Our cooperation with one another to advance his mission after his departure.

This standard established by Śrīla Prabhupāda—actions that disclose far more than ardent words— also expresses the essence of the *vāṇī-sevā* by which we attain and sustain association with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Furthermore, to cooperate together to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the very meaning of *saṇkīrtana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained this wonderfully:

> The purport of the verse is that even Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu—He is God himself, Kṛṣṇa Himself—He felt, alone, unable to do this task. He felt. So this is the position. You are cooperating; therefore I am getting the credit. Otherwise alone what could I do? *Ekākī āmāra nāhi pāya bolo*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself wanted our cooperation. He is God, Kṛṣṇa. And therefore cooperation is very important thing. Nobody should think that "I have got so great ability. I can do." No. It is simply by cooperation we can do very big thing. "United we stand; divided we fall." This is our. . . . So be strong in pushing on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and Kṛṣṇa will help. He is the strongest. Still, we must be combined together. *Saṅkīrtana*. *Saṅkīrtana* means many men combined together chanting. That is *saṅkīrtana*. Otherwise *kīrtana*. *Saṅkīrtana*. *Bahubhir militvā kīrtayatīti saṅkīrtanam*. *Bahu: bahu* means many, many combined together. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission, combined together.[76]

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[75] Posted on GBC.Discussions@pamho.net, by Bhakti Charu Swami, June 21, 2013.

[76] VB: Conversation with Rādhā-Dāmodara Saṅkīrtana Party. March 16, 1976, Māyāpur. The verse Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to is Ādi 9.34. Lord Caitanya says: "I am the only gardener. How many places can I go? How many fruits can I pick

After two influential leaders had left ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave this counsel to Babhru Dāsa on December 9, 1973. May it always remain in our hearts:

> Now, we have by Krsna's Grace built up something significant in the shape of this ISKCON and we are all one family. Sometimes there may be disagreement and quarrel but we should not go away. These inebrieties can be adjusted by the cooperative spirit, tolerance and maturity so I request you to kindly remain in the association of our devotees and work together. The test of our actual dedication and sincerity to serve the Spiritual Master will be in this mutual cooperative spirit to push on this Movement and not make factions and deviate.

We discovered that the initial "zonal-*ācārya*" system of integrating the guru into a broad structure implicitly created geographical zones that were individually more unified than ISKCON as a whole. The integrity of ISKCON came in to jeopardy. That system has been abolished. Yet we need to go much further in realizing the organization Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted.

We need to go much further. We look forward to establishing a culture in ISKCON of committed cooperative servitorship under Śrīla Prabhupāda. When this becomes established as a culture, each and every member—top to bottom—shares equally in it. It is so thoroughly part of the essence of existence in the Krishna Consciousness movement that it dwells even in the smallest gesture. Children take it in with their mother's milk. It is all pervading. We will be perpetually in the presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda—and of those in whose presence he dwells.

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and distribute?" In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda points out: "Here Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu indicates that the distribution of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* should be performed by combined forces."

It is interesting to note that two prominent anti-ISKCON movements—often claiming to be the "real ISKCON"—have formed by specific rejection of one or the other component of Prabhupāda's whole: the "ritvik" position wishes to do away with actual gurus in favor of GBC institutional authority, while the followers of one prominent sannyāsī or another wish to eliminate an actual GBC and rely on the charismatic, autocratic single *ācārya*.

Specific rejection of one or the other component. As we learn from the Gauḍīya Maṭha, it is clearly a challenge to get it right. We now have our own schismatic groups, and we should treat them as Śrīla Prabhupāda did the remnant factions of the Gauḍīya Maṭha: With a clear and incisive understanding of their deviations; with a generous, well-wishing attitude; and with endless patience.

ISKCON needs to foster both elements: an intense common loyalty to ISKCON and the GBC, and the deep and full teaching relationship between individual gurus and disciples within ISKCON. We need to realize how there is no contradiction and no conflict. We need to realize how they reinforce and support each other.

A crucial element in establishing this necessary synthesis is achieving a deep understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's position and putting that understanding into action—both *jñāna* and *vijñāna*. As Founder-*Ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself symbolizes—and, in a sense, is—the unity of ISKCON. Therefore he must become an inescapable predominate felt presence in the lives of all devotees, no matter who else may serve as their *dīkṣā* or *śikṣā* gurus. Gurus still manifest in the world tend to make a more vivid impact on their followers than those now unmanifest in form. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda's person is now unmanifest as such, this absence of *vapu* needs to be compensated for by an ever-deepening realization of his manifestation as *vāṇi* (as he himself taught).

Understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda's position. It is hoped that the present paper will be one among many more that aim to foster ever-deepening understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda as Founder-*Ācārya* and ever-increasing devoted service to him.

Such presence needs to become so much a part of the fabric of ISKCON, to become the essential savor of its culture, that his presence will not diminish even when all who personally knew Śrīla Prabhupāda follow him from this world.

His presence will not diminish. Culture has been defined by anthropologists as the sum total of learned behavior of a group that is transmitted from generation to generation. The great gift to posterity each generation of ISKCON can give is the gift of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Outcomes

There will be many consequences when Śrīla Prabhupāda's position as Founder-*Ācārya* is realized. Among them: 1) Generation after generation will be enabled to receive the special mercy offered by Śrīla Prabhupāda. The path back to Godhead he opened will become ever-increasingly travelled. 2) By taking full shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda as *śikṣā* guru in his *vāṇi* manifestation, all teachers in ISKCON, on various levels of advancement, will be able to authentically convey Śrīla Prabhupāda's real teaching, thus giving proper guidance, shelter, and protection to all. 3) Śrīla Prabhupāda's active presence will secure the unity and integrity of ISKCON. 4) ISKCON's teachings will remain consistent over space and time. 5) Śrīla Prabhupāda's realized knowledge—endowing him with the specific potency to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness—will not only be preserved but also developed. 6) His books will remain central to us, for they contain insights and directions that await future development to be realized. 7) Śrīla Prabhupāda's eyes will always remain the lens through which all future generations see our predecessor *ācāryas.*

ABBREVIATIONS

BG	*Bhagavad-gītā*
BS	*Brahma-saṁhitā*
CB	*Caitanya Bhagavat*
CC	*Caitanya-caritāmṛita*
BTG	*Back to Godhead*
HKE	*The Hare Krishna Explosion*
Harm.	*The Harmonist*
Kṛṣṇa	*Kṛṣṇa: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*
MHP	*Modern Hindu Personalism*
NDM	*Navadvīpa-dhāma-māhātmya*
SS	*Servant of the Servant*
SKC	*Sree Krishna Caitanya*
SBV	*Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava*
SPL	*Śrīla Prabhupāda-lilamrita*
SB	*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
TKG	*TKG's Diary*
VB	VedaBase

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GLOSSARY

ACCORD: Agreement or harmony.

ADROIT: Skillful in using the hands or mind; dexterous, active, clever.

AEGIS: The protection, backing, or support of a particular person or organization.

ALLEGORY: Description of a subject under the guise of some other subject of aptly suggestive resemblance; a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one; a symbol.

ALLUSION: Implied, or indirect reference; an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference.

ALLUVIAL: Of, pertaining to, or consisting of alluvium; deposited from flowing water; or pertaining to such a deposit.

ANALOGOUS: Comparable in certain respects, typically in a way that makes clearer the nature of the things compared.

ANALOGUE: An analogous word or thing; a representative in different circumstances or situation; something performing a corresponding part.

ANOMALY: Something that deviates from what is standard, normal, or expected.

ANTIPATHY: Feeling against, hostile feeling towards; constitutional or settled aversion or dislike.

APHORISM: A PITHY OBSERVATION THAT CONTAINS A GENERAL TRUTH.

APPELLATION: A DESIGNATION, NAME, OR TITLE GIVEN.

APPURTENANCE: A THING WHICH NATURALLY AND FITLY FORMS A SUBORDINATE PART OF, OR BELONGS TO, A WHOLE SYSTEM; A CONTRIBUTORY ADJUNCT, AN ACCESSORY.

ARDENT: ENTHUSIASTIC OR PASSIONATE.

ATTESTATION: PROVIDE OR SERVE AS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF.

ATTRIBUTION: ASCRIBE A WORK OR REMARK TO (A PARTICULAR AUTHOR, ARTIST, OR SPEAKER).

AU COURANT: AWARE OF WHAT IS GOING ON; WELL INFORMED; FASHIONABLE.

AVER: TO DECLARE TRUE, ASSERT THE TRUTH OF (A STATEMENT).

CARTOGRAPHY: THE SCIENCE OR PRACTICE OF DRAWING MAPS.

CHRISTEN: GIVE TO (SOMEONE OR SOMETHING) A NAME THAT REFLECTS A NOTABLE QUALITY OR CHARACTERISTIC.

COIGN OF VANTAGE: A FAVORABLE POSITION FOR OBSERVATION OR ACTION.

COINAGE: THE (DELIBERATE) FORMATION OF A NEW WORD.

CONSUMMATE: COMPLETED, PERFECTED, FULLY ACCOMPLISHED.

CONSUMMATION: THE POINT AT WHICH SOMETHING IS COMPLETE OR FINALIZED.

CONTROLLING METAPHOR: A METAPHOR THAT PERVADES OR ORGANIZES AN ENTIRE LITERARY WORK.

ECCLESIOLOGY: THEOLOGY AS APPLIED TO THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF A CHURCH.

EFFICACIOUS: SUCCESSFUL IN PRODUCING A DESIRED OR INTENDED RESULT; EFFECTIVE.

ELUCIDATE: MAKE (SOMETHING) CLEAR; EXPLAIN.

EMBRYONIC: (Of a system, idea, or organization) in a rudimentary stage with potential for further development; Immature, undeveloped.

EMINENT: Of persons: Exalted, dignified in rank or station.

ENACTOR: Someone who put into practice (a belief, idea, or suggestion).

ENDEMIC: Constantly or regularly found among a (specified) people.

ENGENDER: Cause or give rise to (a feeling, situation, or condition); To form, originate, be produced.

ENSUE: To happen or occur afterward.

EPIGRAM: A pithy saying or remark expressing an idea in a clever and amusing way.

EVINCE: To prove by argument or evidence; to establish.

ETYMOLOGY: The origin of a word and the historical development of its meaning.

EXPLICATION: The process of developing or bringing out what is implicitly contained in a notion, proposition, principle, etc.; the result of this process.

EXPOUND: Present and explain (a theory or idea) systematically and in detail.

EXPOSITION: A comprehensive description and explanation of an idea or theory.

FACADE: An outward appearance that is maintained to conceal a less pleasant or creditable reality.

FEIGN: Pretend to be affected by.

FORAY: An attempt to become involved in a new activity or sphere.

FREIGHT: To load, store; To bear upon as a load.

GRANDILOQUENT: Extravagant in language, style, or manner, especially in a way that is intended to impress.

IMMOLATE: Kill or offer as a sacrifice, especially by burning.

IMPROMPTU: Done without being planned, organized, or rehearsed.

IMP: A little devil or demon, an evil spirit.

INDEFATIGABLE: Incapable of being wearied; that cannot be tired out; unwearied, untiring, unremitting in labour or effort.

INDIFFERENCE: Lack of interest, concern, or sympathy.

INSIDIOUS: Treacherous, deceitful, underhand, cunning, crafty.

INVIOLABLE: Never to be broken, infringed, or dishonored.

LUMINARY: A person who inspires or influences others, esp. one prominent in a particular sphere.

MAGISTERIAL: Having or showing great authority; of or pertaining to a master-workman; displaying a master's skill.

MATRONYMIC: A name derived from the name of a mother or female ancestor.

MILIEU: A medium, environment, 'surroundings'.

MORPHOLOGY: Shape, form, external structure or arrangement.

NATAL: Of or relating to the place or time of one's birth.

NIHILISM: An extreme form of scepticism, involving the denial of all existence.

OCCLUDE: Stop, close up, or obstruct.

PALATIAL: Resembling a palace in being spacious and splendid.

PARADIGMATIC: Serving as a pattern; exemplary.

PATRONYMIC: A name derived from the name of a father or ancestor, typically by the addition of a prefix or suffix.

PARAMOUNT: More important than anything else; supreme.

PERDURABLE: Enduring continuously; imperishable.

POSTERITY: All future generations of people.

PRECEPTOR: One who instructs; a teacher, instructor.

PRIMORDIAL: Existing at or from the beginning of time.

PROFFER: To bring or put before a person for acceptance; to offer, present.

PROGENITOR: A person or thing from which something originates; an ancestor or parent.

PROMINENCE: The fact or condition of standing out from something by physically projecting or being particularly noticeable.

PROPOUND: Put forward (an idea, theory, or point of view) for consideration by others.

PROTOTYPE: a first, typical or preliminary model of something, from which other forms are developed or copied.

PROVENANCE: The place of origin or earliest known history of something.

PYRE: A pile or heap of combustible material, especially wood; usually, a funeral pile for burning a dead body.

RAGTAG: Untidy, disorganized, or incongruously varied in character.

RAREFIED: Of or relating to a select group.

REDACT: To put (matter) into proper literary form; to work up, arrange, or edit.

REFERENT: That which is referred to by a word or expression.

REPOSED: Be situated or kept in a particular place; place something, especially confidence or trust, in.

REPRISE: A repetition or further performance of something.

RESOLUTE: Admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering.

RESPLENDENT: Attractive and impressive through being richly colorful or sumptuous.

RHETORICAL: Expressed in terms intended to persuade or impress.

SALVIFIC: Tending to save, causing salvation.

SCHISM: A split or division between strongly opposed sections or parties, caused by differences in opinion or belief.

SPURN: Reject with disdain or contempt.

SUBLATE: Assimilate (a smaller entity) into a larger one.

TARRY: To abide temporarily, to sojourn; to stay, remain, lodge (in a place).

TERMINUS: A final point in space or time; an end or extremity.

TOEHOLD: A relatively insignificant position from which further progress may be made.

UNASSUAGEABLE: Not able to be soothed or relieved.

UNDETERRED: Persevering with something despite setbacks.

UNOBTRUSIVE: Not conspicuous or attracting attention.

UNOCCLUDED: Not obstructed.

UNTOWARD: Unexpected and inappropriate or inconvenient.

VALORIZE: Give or ascribe value or validity to (something).

VERIDICAL: Truthful; coinciding with reality.

VICISSITUDE: A change of circumstances or fortune, typically one that is unwelcome or unpleasant.

VINDICATE: SHOW OR PROVE TO BE RIGHT, REASONABLE, OR JUSTIFIED.

VIRULENT: BITTERLY HOSTILE.

Definitions taken from the Oxford English Dictionary and the Oxford American English Dictionary.

In ISKCON, Prabhupāda himself remains present, generation after generation, as the single prominent śikṣā-guru immanent in the life of each and every ISKCON devotee—a perpetual, indwelling active guiding and directing presence. He is thus the soul of ISKCON.

As such, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself continues to act effectively in this world so long as ISKCON continues as the coherent expression and unified instrument of his will. In this way Śrīla Prabhupāda remains the soul of ISKCON, and ISKCON his body.

This book is not meant for casual reading
but for implementation.

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