Executive Summary for Honoring the Law of Disciplic Succession

This is the Executive Summary to the paper Honoring the Law of Disciplic Succession: A Pāñcarātrika perspective on the appointment of dīkṣā-gurus in ISKCON, by Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Dāsa, Dāmodara Dāsa, Dāmodara Caitanya Dāsa and Kamala Caraṇa Dāsa. For further details and full pramāṇas, please refer to this paper. (Page numbers are given in red.)

Your servants, the authors.

- "The Law of Disciplic Succession" (TLODS) is a *paramparā* etiquette that disallows an otherwise qualified disciple from accepting his own disciples during the lifetime of his spiritual master but afterwards allows him to accept disciples without limitation (letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, 2 Dec. 1975). (1)
- The disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda followed TLODS. (13)
- But *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Nārada Pañcarātra* explicitly allow a qualified disciple to accept disciples on the order of his spiritual master. Works such as *Jaiva-dharma* and *Śrī Rasika-maṅgala* give such examples. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura himself initiated disciples in the presence of both Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Gaura Kiśora dāsa Bābājī. (42)
- And Śrīla Prabhupāda himself indicated that he could have allowed it (room conv, 22 Apr. 1977). (1)
- Therefore, TLODS cannot absolutely disallow disciples in ISKCON from accepting their own disciples while their gurus are still living. (8,22,25)
- But since Śrīla Prabhupāda himself followed TLODS and never instructed his disciples to initiate in any way other than TLODS, to do otherwise requires the current process in ISKCON to be brought strictly in line with the rules and regulations of *pāñcarātrika-vidhi,* especially as given in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Nārada Pañcarātra.* (12)
- Otherwise, the process is neither following guru nor any established *vidhi* and would therefore be against the principles of devotional service. (8)
- Current ISKCON procedure for appointing gurus does not require that a guru be an *uttama-adhikārī* and is biased toward appointing *madhyama-adhikārī* gurus. (6)
- But *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* requires that candidates for *dīkṣā-guru* be *uttama-adhikārīs.* (9)
- Śrīla Prabhupāda also says that candidates should be *uttama-adhikārīs.* (6)
- *Pāñcarātrika* standard of *uttama-adhikārī* is easier to assess and attain than the *bhāgavata* standard. (8)
- Minimum qualification: a candidate for guru must be both *pāñcarātrika uttama-adhikārī* and *bhāgavata madhyama-adhikārī* simultaneously. (1)
- Majority opinion: TLODS must be followed until candidates in general are *pañcarātra uttama* and *bhāgavata madhyama* and procedures follow *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Nārada Pañcarātra.* (10)
- Minority opinion: ISKCON should move away from TLODS to gurus appointing their disciples as gurus with limited numbers of disciples, as per *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* because: (21 onwards, all subsequent points covered)
  - Present TLODS model in ISKCON produces a small number of gurus who are generally on the *vaidhi-bhakti* platform but also tend to have large numbers of disciples.
  - They are more susceptible to falling down on account of accepting the sins of too many disciples (see CC Madhya 22.118).
  - Gurus with small numbers of disciples are less likely to fall down.
  - They can more accurately assess their own disciples for becoming *ācārya* than a bureaucracy.
  - More personal oversight and training are given to fewer disciples, improves the quality of the *paramparā.*
  - *Vyāsa-pūjās* and worship are performed with less pomp, does not compete with pomp and worship accorded to Śrīla Prabhupāda, better centers his instructions and standards in devotees' minds.