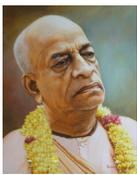


Sampradaya Acarya Transcends Siksa and Diksa

This is in response to the recent article, "[Absentia Diksa Guru Initiation](#)" by Dusyanta dasa. First, we would like to compliment the author for his presentation of this interesting dilemma. We understand that he's not a committed Rtvik, but is making this presentation to encourage dialogue and understanding on guru-tattva, which we appreciate.



As most Sun readers know, I've written quite extensively on this subject, and have published a paper that serves as a basic introduction to my treatise on Srila Prabhupada as the Sampradaya Acarya. There are two important questions confronting the devotees, namely, who is Srila Prabhupada and what does it mean to be initiated? In my [Sampradaya Acarya](#) writings I've addressed these questions. In fact, this whole website is ultimately dedicated to the concept of recognizing Srila Prabhupada's exalted status. I look forward to one day being able to expand upon the ideas presented in the Sampradaya Acarya paper, making the arguments more complete, adding citations, etc., but for now, I've simply extracted a few statements from that paper and from a Q&A document that followed it, which I think are relevant to the issues raised by Dusyanta dasa.

In considering the issues raised by Dusyanta prabhu, one thing immediately appears to be a problem – the author has adopted and repeatedly mentioned the idea that Srila Prabhupada is everybody's preeminent siksa guru within ISKCON. This is terminology that's been introduced into the ISKCON community by the GBC, but there are no Vedic roots and no sastric evidence that this is a fact, and Srila Prabhupada never presented himself as such. It's simply a way in which the institution and its leaders can designate Srila Prabhupada in a special position, without really giving us a clear understanding of what this 'preeminent siksa guru', or 'maha-siksa' actually is – particularly in relationship to themselves, as diksa gurus.

When compared to or reflected onto the position I have presented of Srila Prabhupada as a Sampradaya Acarya, this 'maha-siksa' designation is actually a step down. First of all, Srila Prabhupada is not simply restricted to the ISKCON institution, or to association with the followers participating in the ISKCON institution, or even to those who follow Srila Prabhupada from outside the institution, considering themselves to be in the bigger ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada is not limited to just this.

As I understand and present him, Srila Prabhupada is a Sampradaya Acarya – he belongs on the List of 32 Sampradaya Acaryas – a list that has been presented by previous Sampradaya Acaryas including his Spiritual Master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur. These three great Sampradaya Acaryas have been sent – these nitya-siddha acaryas -- to spread

Krishna Consciousness throughout the world. As such, they are direct associates of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and are part of His lila. Even though they come hundreds of years after His departure, still His prediction is being fulfilled by these nitya-siddhas. These three great Acaryas in succession have accomplished what He predicted, and are therefore part of Lord Caitanya's lila.

Like the previous Sampradaya Acarya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, Srila Prabhupada emphasized and tried to distill in our consciousness not only an indication, but a very strong understanding of their positions as Acaryas. While preaching in this way, they still fall within the parameters of the pure Vaisnava who is humble by nature. It's not their nature, and it goes against the philosophy of a pure devotee to make a proclamation about their own particular spiritual position. Even Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu set that example, insisting that He was not God. It was only His followers who recognized, presented and worshipped Him as such. In the same way, Srila Prabhupada presented Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati as a Vaikuntha man, as someone who is a nitya-siddha, and he treated and acted towards him in that manner. If one studies his teachings, we can see that Srila Prabhupada took the same mood and preached in the same manner as Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, but in the English language and to the western followers.

There are two concepts that have been imbedded in ISKCON parlance -- the idea of Srila Prabhupada being the 'preeminent siksa guru', or 'maha-siksa', and the notion that the diksa guru is the only way to link up to the eternal Sampradaya. As I said above, this siksa guru terminology relegates Srila Prabhupada to a lesser position than his true spiritual position. In fact, he is everybody's Sampradaya Acarya -- inside ISKCON or not inside ISKCON.

Applying this designation to Srila Prabhupada also effectively minimizes and practically nullifies the position of the siksa guru in ISKCON. Dusyanta dasa has provided us with various quotes wherein the previous Acaryas have made it clear that siksa and diksa are on the same level, but to this very day, the GBC have failed – even though they've tried through committees and designated so-called brahmanas -- to come up with a definition of what a siksa is, or tell us what the position of siksa guru is in ISKCON in comparison to the diksa guru, what to speak of the comparison of siksa or diksa to Srila Prabhupada.

From my perspective the siksa guru has been minimized in ISKCON, although Srila Prabhupada emphasized it. He emphasized it practically, in the sense that anyone who came during his lila period was essentially pushed into the position of a siksa guru – we were all urged to go out and preach: temple presidents were siksa gurus, the sankirtana leaders were siksa gurus, permanent members of the temple community were giving Srimad Bhagavatam classes, and as such, they were siksa gurus. Then the Bhakta Program was introduced into ISKCON, which was essentially a siksa guru position.

Within Srila Prabhupada's movement we treated Srila Prabhupada as a Sampradaya Acarya, not simply as a diksa or siksa guru, and this is what his Godbrothers found fault with us for. What we did in terms of our daily morning sadhana program, when we chanted the Prayers to the Spiritual Master and had a special puja for the Spiritual Master, putting Srila Prabhupada on a big vyasasana, making murtis of Srila Prabhupada, and so on -- that whole phenomenon was not something you'd find in the Gaudiya Matha. And this was not simply a glorification of Srila Prabhupada in the position of the diksa or the 'preeminent siksa guru' – this was actually a glorification of him in the position of the Sampradaya Acarya, although we didn't describe it as such at the time. After his departure, the ISKCON leaders tried to maintain that to a certain degree

—or in a sense they were forced to maintain it, by keeping Srila Prabhupada's murti in the temple and having daily guru-puja for -- but without really defining who Srila Prabhupada is in relationship to them, as diksa and siksa gurus.

In my writings, I've given my opinion on the institutionalization of diksa, and how the leaders, after Srila Prabhupada's departure, obviously saw that the real power was not in some institutional position like GBC, or other positions in the institution. The power was in taking the position of diksa guru. To them, Srila Prabhupada was just a diksa guru, and his power came not because he was the Founder-Acarya, but because he was the Spiritual Master. Sastra supports the spiritual master/disciple relationship, but it does not address any institutional positions as being of great authority than that.

As stated in the quotes provided by Dusyanta dasa, siksa and diksa are not different, therefore the disciple of the siksa or diksa should have the same attitude, reverence and appreciation towards the siksa as towards the diksa. But the big dilemma in terms of what is presented in his article, from my perspective, is the fact that Srila Prabhupada is not on the same level as a diksa guru who's not physically present.

And at this point in history it should be recognized that in order to accept either guru – diksa or siksa – the guru's authenticity or his ability to accept disciples and preach should be judged and understood to be bona fide based on his recognition of Srila Prabhupada's exalted position as Sampradaya Acarya, and their expression of the preaching mood demonstrated by him. Srila Prabhupada

regularly uses the term 'bona fide' to describe the spiritual master; he hardly ever uses the terms 'diksa' or 'siksa'. And a bona fide Spiritual Master is one who's following in the footsteps of the previous Acaryas – particularly the previous Sampradaya Acaryas, who do not deviate one inch from the teachings and mood of the previous Sampradaya Acaryas and their emphasis on preaching.

Srila Prabhupada primarily disagreed with his Godbrothers not because they were preaching bogus philosophy, but because they did not have the preaching mood that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati tried to instill in them. Instead, they went into the traditional diksa guru/disciple matha roles. None of them were able to come up to the level of the Sampradaya Acarya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, except for Srila Prabhupada.

I have already spoken at length on these topics, and anyone who wants to read a few extracts from my Sampradaya Acarya paper will find them below, and elsewhere in the [Sun archives](#) . Maybe something here will help to unlock this dilemma, as most recently presented by Dusyanta dasa.

From 'The Sampradaya Acarya': The Siksa Conclusion

The abbreviated definition of "initiation" is the admission of a neophyte disciple

into the unadulterated philosophical and transcendental mysteries handed down by a succession of past Gaudiya Vaisnava Sampradaya Acaryas. As Srila Prabhupada stated:

"Well initiation or no initiation, first thing is knowledge... knowledge. Initiation is formality. Just like you go to a school for knowledge, and admission is formality. That is not very important thing."

(Srila Prabhupada Press Interview, 10-16-76, Chandigarh)

The past Acaryas have established the principle that a sincere candidate can be connected to the Sampradaya via the advanced siksa guru. In fact, one of the distinguishing common features of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and Srila Prabhupada is that both emphasized and reinforced the concept and principle of siksa guru being as important as diksa.

"Thakura Bhaktivinoda was not official Spiritual Master of Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja. Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja was already renounced order, Paramahansa, but Thakura Bhaktivinoda, while He was even playing the part of a householder, was treated by Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja as Preceptor, on account of His highly elevated spiritual understanding, and thus He

was always treating Him as His Spiritual Master. The Spiritual Master is divided into two parts; namely, siksa guru and diksa guru. So officially Bhaktivinoda Thakura was like siksa guru of Gaura Kisora das Babaji Maharaja."

(Srila Prabhupada Letter to Dayananda, 05-01-69)

In the minds of the leaders of these religious groups, giving prominence to the siksa guru threatens to undermine their power base. Diksa initiation is their greatest tool for maintaining power. The telltale indication that religiosity is eclipsing spirituality is the degree of aggressive close-mindedness aimed at those perceived to hold and expound opinions that differ from the camp's 'absolute' creed. The member's unquestioning allegiance to the religious group's unique perspective on tattva is paramount, insulating the group supporter from scrutiny of other sastric considerations. Accurate appraisal of an individual's character, motivation, qualities, behavior, and so on, become based not on the principles found within the Sampradaya siddhanta, but rather on loyalty to the organization. By definition, the "science of self-realization" depends upon the spiritualist's objectivity and inquisitiveness, which is the antithesis of blind obedience to religious doctrine interpreted exclusively by those protecting their power base.

The bonafide Acaryas, representatives of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, indiscriminately distribute the transcendental knowledge that culminates in Pure Love of Godhead. Anyone who has developed a thorough understanding of the essential intentions of the nitya-siddha Acarya is a true Guru, whatever prefix one assigns to the Guru title. Unfortunately, the role and importance of the siksa guru in spreading the Sankirtan Movement is not emphasized in the institutional context.

Not only is the siksa position a safe alternative because it eliminates the risks of philosophical deviation, it also provides many practical spiritual benefits. The sastric definition of siksa guru encompasses a much wider range of potential spiritual relationships than does diksa. Siksa requires no absolute eternal commitment on the part of either disciple or guru, so there is less chance for aparada if the relationship declines.

There is no precise definition concerning how a disciple should worship their siksa guru, which reduces pressure on the disciple to make the diksa the exclusive focus of all loving affections. If siksa relationships are the norm within the Vaisnava Community, then there is a far greater chance that Srila Prabhupada will remain the highest standard of purity and respect for all siksa disciples. By keeping Srila Prabhupada at the center, the disciple is relieved of the potential for a great deal of bewilderment which can lead to a loss of faith.

The siksa disciple's ultimate desire is to please and serve the Sampradaya Acarya (the pre-eminent siksa). The siksa disciple may have the satisfaction and confidence of knowing that their primary object of affection, Srila Prabhupada, is unquestionably a transparent via media to Sri Krishna. In other words, they have undeniably been admitted into the Sampradaya, and there will be no chance of fall down of the Acarya.

According to Vaisnava philosophy, one can aspire and diligently apply oneself to the spiritual process in expectation that in the next life, you can directly associate with Srila Prabhupada. Under this scenario, a traditional diksa relationship can

eventually transpire. In the meantime, there are plenty of qualified living siksa gurus who are completely dedicated to serving Srila Prabhupada and to assisting the aspiring disciple in obtaining his or her goal.

Diksa gurus tend to want the independence to adapt, change or "personalize" the previous Sampradaya Acarya's program and mood. Most diksa gurus hanker for their own independent ashram or institution, occupied primarily by those who are their cent percent followers. Siksa gurus, on the other hand, tend to follow closely the Acarya's established mood and program, and are less likely to run the risk of changing the Founder/Acarya's established undertaking.

Prabhupada: "Then so siksa and diksa-guru... A siksa-guru who instructs against the instruction of spiritual, he is not a siksa guru. He is a demon. Siksa-guru, diksa-guru means... Sometimes a diksa-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the siksa-guru. Siksa-guru does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the diksa-guru/Acarya. He is not a siksa-guru. He is a rascal."

(Srila Prabhupada Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 17.1-3, 07-04-74, Honolulu)

Siksa disciples are free to search out other siksa gurus who may be better qualified to satisfy their various spiritual interests and needs without having their

educational pursuits sanctioned and/or vetoed by a disagreeable diksa. If the disciple's affections lie with Srila Prabhupada, then the words and actions of the siksa guru can be freely scrutinized based on Srila Prabhupada's writings, without risking offense.

Siksa affords an opportunity for serious followers of the Sampradaya Acarya who are inspired to teach and preach to assume the role of guru without running the risk of committing offenses that result in karmic reaction to himself or the disciple.

Sastra dictates that there is no karmic burden placed upon the siksa guru, whereas there is an assumed acceptance of vi-karma of the new initiate upon the diksa guru. Those who are not in a spiritual position to give diksa, but pretentiously project themselves as bonafide, are actually only giving siksa, because they are not transparent via media conduits for the disciple's past karmic reactions. The unsuspecting disciples are deceived into believing they have been freed from karma, and the unqualified diksa guru accumulates karma without being able to transfer it to the spiritual realm.

Siksa places the power to determine one's spiritual path in the hands of the individual seeker. Advocating an emphasis on the siksa alternative will likely reduce the institutional power base of die-hard diksa advocates, including the diksa gurus, the GBC, leaders of Rtvik organizations, and the Acarya-led Mathas.

Spiritual missions that are established by Sampradaya Acaryas should have as their primary focus an imperative to preach and teach the unalloyed message of

the founder. While there will always be a role for diksa initiation in the spiritual community, nothing should eclipse our focus on the Sampradaya Acarya.

From 'Sampradaya Acarya' Questions and Answers

It is my belief that the ritual practices of performing a fire Yajna, chanting on japa beads and choosing of the spiritual name are of far lesser importance than the heart felt commitment to accepting and following the knowledge presented by the Sampradaya Acarya. These religious practices can be introduced and/or performed in order to surcharge the aspirant's resolute vow to follow and serve the great Acaryas. The above-mentioned initiation ceremonies can be engaged in within an institutional setting or privately without any difference in potency.

I do not envision the diksa process ever being completely moth-balled. We will always find individuals on both sides of this equation (guru and disciple) who will be determined to venture down this path. Our sastra has verified and sanctioned this type of spiritual relationship. Srila Prabhupada hasn't banned its existence therefore who am I, or who is any other conditioned soul, to make claim that diksa should be abandoned? I am recommending that a high degree of caution should be taken when dealing with those individuals who have a vested self-interest in seeing that diksa gurus are exclusively promoted. Such emphasis over and above siksa gurus representing and presenting the Sampradaya Acarya is suspect. "There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating [diksa] and instructing [siksa] spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service." (CC Adi 1.47)

"There is no limit, however, to the number of instructing spiritual masters one may accept (CC Adi-lila 1.35)." I assert that the "traditionalist" exponents who are emphatic about the prerequisite for a sincere truth seeker to search out and surrender to a "living" diksa guru should be looked upon with a high degree of suspicion. More than likely, they can be accurately identified as being one of a combination of the following: a religionist, a cultist in the guise of a disciple, less intelligent, and/or any of a variety of types of suppressionists.

The Sampradaya Acaryas have made their positions on this subject abundantly clear, but surprisingly, so many devotees have chosen to ignore their message. Initiation into our Sampradaya isn't solely dependent upon taking diksa initiation. In identifying the members of the Sampradaya, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura de-emphasized the traditional diksa guru parampara, which had been abused in many circumstances in the past. Instead, he stressed the Bhagavata or siksa-guru parampara. The Bhagavata succession is taken from the Srimad Bhagavatam, wherein Krsna enlightened Lord Brahma, who then spoke absolute truth to Narada Muni, who passed it on to Srila Vyasadeva. His son, Sukadeva Goswami, underwent no diksa but received the essence of Bhagavatam from Vyasa, who recited it, in seven days, to Pariksit Maharaja, Suta Goswami and others present during the recitation. All were fully enlightened but none were direct diksa disciples of Srila Sukadeva.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta traced the Bhagavata guru parampara from Krishna to Madhvacarya, who while initiated by Acyuta Preksa of the Shankara sampradaya, is said to have received siksa of Vyasa. The Gaudiya Vaisnava parampara is therefore traced from Madhva's siksa guru, Srila Vyasa, rather than from Madhva's established diksa guru. So we can see that our lineage isn't dependent upon a diksa line -- in fact, it runs quite contrary to that concept.

Within a relatively recent history (500 years), the planet has been blessed with the manifestation of the Yuga Avatara, Who appeared within our Brahma Madhva Gaudiya Sampradaya. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, along with all His associates, followed by a whole host of other nitya-siddha Acaryas such as Narottama das Thakura, and most recently, a succession of nitya-siddha Sampradaya Acaryas including Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, and A.C. Bhaktivedanta Srila Prabhupada, appeared.

Any "regular" Guru must first and foremost qualify themselves on the basis of their recognition of those Sampradaya Acaryas included in our disciplic succession. This implies appreciating that Srila Prabhupada is not only included, but is the most recent representative. As such, all aspects of Srila Prabhupada's pastimes must be understood to be the "sum total" of all the prior teachings of the past members of this "unbroken" Succession. Srila Prabhupada has been empowered to deliver the complete transcendental message and methodology in the most understandable and practical manner according to the principle of time, place and circumstance. Those who realize and preach this vision, I consider to be qualified to be recognized as regular gurus in whatever capacity: diksa, siksa, as well as vartma-pradarsaka. Followers approaching these gurus for guidance must take responsibility for their own decisions in the matter of the degree of surrender.

Even well intentioned efforts by sincere but imperfect followers of the Sampradaya Acarya can be thwarted by Maya devi in her many forms. A humble preacher should be aware of the dangers involved in prematurely accepting responsibilities beyond their level of advancement. Diksa guru and Sannyasa status may appear to be useful positions from which to preach, but the karmic burden -- as well as the contamination of excessive adoration and distinction -- can seriously impact one's spiritual strength. Any minimization of the

Sampradaya Acarya that is perpetrated in order to gain a high degree of personal recognition is, in itself, offensive. The students of such usurpers are exposed to even further risk if there is a "fall down". Promoting, serving and humbly emulating the true Sampradaya Acarya is the safest path for all Vaisnava preachers.