

# The Reality of Guru-Parampara and the Myth of "The Final Order"

**Part one of a series of essays**  
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*The following paper is the second in a series of articles examining some serious (indeed fatal) weaknesses in the Ritvik scenario, and pointing out some essential aspects of guru-tattva. It is meant for those who are trying to make sense of the current ISKCON GBC / Ritvik/ Gaudiya Matha polemic. [Part Two Part Three Part Four]*

## Part 1: The "henceforward" bluff

The Ritviks say that there is no further need for living spiritual masters, because Srila Prabhupada has said that everyone should take initiation from him for the next ten thousand years, and all future devotees will be his direct disciples. This directly contradicts everything that Srila Prabhupada has written and taught about disciplic succession. In a gospel called *"The Final Order"*, one of the chief Ritvik prophets acknowledges that the alleged Ritvik system is "totally unique" (i.e. devoid of sastric basis), and then proceeds to explain the Ritvik logic in some detail.

The Ritvik case rests on the letter written by Srila Prabhupada's secretary on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1977. The letter names 11 senior disciples who were to act as Srila Prabhupada's representatives, and then states, "... Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple." Ritviks say that this word "henceforward" means that, regardless of Srila Prabhupada's physical departure, the system should be continued indefinitely, for the duration of the Krsna consciousness movement.

We can evaluate this theory using simple rules that Srila Prabhupada has given in various places in his books to help us distinguish between truth, illusion, and falsehood. We will concentrate on four of these in particular: (1) "Tell the truth"; (2) "Take the direct meaning"; (3) "Understand through *sastra*, not independent logic"; (4) "Support and maintain the disciplic succession."

Rule 1 is "Tell the truth": "*Satyam*. This word means that one should not distort the truth for some personal interest." (1) The commonsense understanding of the "henceforward" letter is that the system whereby Srila Prabhupada initiated by proxy should continue "for the time being," but obviously not after his physical departure. It clearly does not make sense to say that the word "henceforward" in this letter means "for the next ten thousand years", because it is nonsense to say, "Temple Presidents may for the next ten thousand years send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple." The "eleven representatives" obviously would not survive for ten thousand years. In fact, two have already passed away and many have already fallen down.

The Ritviks deny this commonsense understanding. The author of *Final Order* (henceforward referred to as AFO) says, "There is no example, either in Srila Prabhupada's 86 recorded uses, nor in the entire history of the English language, where the actual word 'henceforward' has ever meant: 'Every time period until the departure of a person who issued the order'".<sup>(2)</sup> This statement is quite false, for Srila Prabhupada himself used the word in the limited sense that AFO denies: "Henceforward you send the checks direct to me."<sup>(3)</sup> "Please write to me occasionally and as Gopala is not accustomed to reply promptly I shall henceforward write to you."<sup>(4)</sup> Srila Prabhupada also uses the word "henceforth" (which is defined as a synonym of "henceforward") in the same way: "Henceforth, all money sent to me should be sent directly to me;"<sup>(5)</sup> "[H]enceforth, as long as I am away from America and Canada..."<sup>(6)</sup>

For devotees in general, to deny this use of the word "henceforward" would indicate lack of knowledge. However, AFO claims to have studied Srila Prabhupada's use of the word "henceforward", as well as the use of the word throughout history. In his case, then, it appears to be an astonishing misrepresentation of the truth. He is directly obscuring and denying Srila Prabhupada's own clear use of words. Since he is not following Srila Prabhupada's instruction, "Tell the truth", it would not be safe to belong to a spiritual movement that depends on his teachings.

In less than ¼ of the instances on FOLIO does the word "henceforward" actually refer to an indefinite period into the future. Six times Srila Prabhupada uses the word "henceforward" to refer specifically to his own duration of life, e.g. "[H]enceforward I am adding the synonyms myself,"<sup>(7)</sup> and, "I will be sending further tapes henceforward."<sup>(8)</sup> It is clear that after Srila Prabhupada's physical departure he will not in any normal sense be adding synonyms, or sending tapes.

Srila Prabhupada often used the word "henceforward" to clearly imply a set and limited time-frame. A particularly strong example is, "Anyway, rest assured that your son will not be initiated in brahmanahood at least for one year henceforward ..." <sup>(9)</sup> 41 out of about 89 instances of the word (almost half of them) specifically referred to the lifetime of a particular individual: e.g. "In case you think your salary insufficient, henceforward it will be doubled." "You can chant on their beads henceforward" and "I pray Krishna that you may live henceforward happily as a householder." In 15 other instances, the word "henceforward" refers to specific, temporary, practical arrangements in a particular context, especially banking and printing.

Srila Prabhupada uses the word "henceforward" twice in his books to mean "within this section of this book", and it is used in the same sense in the Introduction to the VedaBase. With damning inconsistency, AFO himself uses the word "henceforward" in the same sense in FO: "... the GBC's most recent official handbook on initiation ... (to be referred to henceforward as GII)..." <sup>(10)</sup> This is in spite of his statement that "henceforward" only implies "for an indefinite period" and has no other meaning.

Srila Prabhupada uses the word "henceforth" (synonymous with "henceforward") in the same way that he uses the word "henceforward". Of 15 instances in FOLIO, only 1 refers to an indefinite period into the future. 8 refer to the lifetime of a particular individual, including 2 referring to Srila Prabhupada himself (e.g.); 4 instances refer to specific practical arrangements in a particular context; and 1 refers to the specific context of a

particular document.

SP was precise and correct in his use of the English language, and his use of the word "henceforward" (and its synonym "henceforth") follows the dictionary pattern. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (full version) defines "henceforward" as "From this time forward; henceforth", and gives several instances of the word being used within a specifically limited context: "THEY WERE FRIENDS HENCEFORWARD AS LONG AS GUIDO'S LIFE LASTED" (emphasis added) and "From henceforward for 1500 verses ... we hear nothing more of this second person." This means that the word may be used to mean "within the present context", and specifically "within the lifetime of the person or people involved", as well as "from here on indefinitely". *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* illustrates the use of the word "henceforth" with an example that clearly refers to the lifetime of the person concerned: "But that resource would henceforth be denied him."

It is clear that the word "henceforward" may mean "from this time onwards WITHIN THE LIMITED CONTEXT IN WHICH IT IS USED". The idea that it necessarily means "more or less forever" is simply wishful thinking that has grown up in the Ritvik community and has never been checked.

Srila Prabhupada used the word "henceforward" (and its synonym "henceforth") to refer to (a) activities and situations within a limited period of time, (b) temporary practical arrangements, and (c) the lifetime of a particular individual (including himself). This supports the obvious conclusion that the so-called Ritvik arrangement should cease on Srila Prabhupada's departure, or even earlier.

AFO denies that his case depends on the word "henceforward". He says that the "henceforward" letter, being the last written instruction on initiation, supersedes all other letters and teachings. But, as we will see, the actual instruction in the letter is not to develop a new and unprecedented system of disciplic succession that flatly contradicts all of SP's previous instructions. Nor is there any authority for AFO's concocted rule that the last instruction cancels out everything else.

## References

(1) BG 16.2, purport; (2) FO, p. 11; (3) Letter to Gopala Krsna: 2 February, 1970; (4) Letter to Sally: 6 November, 1965; (5) Letter to Labangalatika: 14 March, 1970; (6) Letter to Kirtanananda: 5 January, 1973; (7) Letter to: Radhavallabha: 20 October, 1975; (8) Letter to Giriraja: 5 July, 1969; (9) Letter: 27 May, 1969; (10) FO, p.3.

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