

H.H. Sivarama Swami's letter

Dear Devotees,

Please accept my blessings, all glories to Srila Prabhupada.

I am writing to you in regard to the magazine "Back to Prabhupada," which many of you may have received and seen, and which reflects the views of certain individuals who were once members of the Hungarian yatra: Braja Balabhi Balabha, Haripada and his wife. It appears that they have become bewildered by a deviation known as the ritvik doctrine and its proponents. It is through them that you have received that magazine. Because their accusations are offensive to the leadership of ISKCON and their arguments offensive to Srila Prabhupada, I am compelled to respond briefly to the doctrine of the magazine, to expose the proponents of that doctrine and to advise devotees in Hungary how protect themselves from both: the doctrine and its proponents.

The doctrine of this magazine, call it ritvika-vada, states that only Srila Prabhupada is the initiating guru for devotees of ISKCON and that none of his disciples or followers are qualified for that role. This doctrine has no precedent in Vaiñëava tradition, it has never been taught nor practiced by our acaryas, and it is not to be found in Srila Prabhupada's books, teachings, or will. It is a complete fabrication. This doctrine is outside our teachings and is called an apa-siddhanta, and those who follow it are outside of our disciplic succession (apa-sampradaya), a deviant splinter group. In this regard Srila Prabhupada writes,

There are many so-called followers of the Vaisnava cult in the line of Caitanya Mahaprabhu who do not scrupulously follow the conclusions of the sastras, and therefore they are considered to be apa-sampradaya, which means outside of the sampradaya. (Purport to Cc-adi 7.48)

Because ritvika-vada is devoid of true philosophical content, ritviks, as can be seen from this magazine, use two methods to confuse their audience: they break devotees' faith and employ spurious arguments.

Ritviks try to break devotees' faith by citing examples of some ISKCON leaders' fall-downs, which although sad history, is irrelevant to their real argument. However by use of such information they paint a false picture of ISKCON, a picture of doom and gloom by which they attempt to disrupt devotees' faith in the Society, its leaders, and its teachings.

Then, when devotees' faith is weakened or uprooted, they implant their doctrine by means of spurious arguments based on distorted and false information. I have included a refutation of ritvika-vada penned by His Holiness Jayadvaita Swami over ten years ago called, Where the ritviks are Wrong. It honestly and humorously exposes the so-called evidence in the magazine for what it is bluff. Also included is an appendix to that refutation by Jayadvaita Maharaja called, Plain Vanilla Made Plain, which very briefly reminds us of the guru-disciple relationship as taught by Srila Prabhupada. Please take the time to read both.

Jayadvaita Swami's arguments should satisfy devotees who are curious to understand the pros and cons of ritvika-vada, convince them of its futility, and protect them from its pernicious effects. As our movement grows in Hungary, it is understandable that maya will place obstacles in the way of such growth. ritviks are neither the first nor the last such obstacle.

Therefore ritviks and their literature should be ignored and devotees should keep association with Vaiñëavas who increase their faith and devotion to Srila Prabhupada and

his movement. As Srila Prabhupada said, "So many agitators came and gone, but the Vedic process will go on. Let the dogs bark, the caravan will pass." (Class on Sb 1.7.45-46) This same instruction is reflected in the direction of the GBC Body, the ultimate authority for ISKCON, in their 1990 law regarding ritviks and their doctrine:

The doctrine that Srila Prabhupada continues to initiate direct disciples after his departure from this world through officiating priests (ritviks) is a dangerous philosophical deviation. It is totally prohibited in ISKCON. No devotee shall participate in such posthumous ritvik initiation ceremonies in any capacity including acting as ritvik, initiate, assistant, organizer, or financier. No ISKCON devotee shall advocate or support its practice. (6.4.7.2. Posthumous ritvik Doctrine, 1990)

The tone of the above law makes it quite clear that persons who are in breach of it can expect to be the object of serious sanctions. Devotees who have any questions about ritvik doctrine or how to deal with ritviks please speak with a local senior devotee or contact me. We will be happy to answer any questions. We must go forward in our spiritual lives and with our preaching projects and not allow ill-motivated people to mislead us from executing Srila Prabhupadas instructions all in the name of going Back to Prabhupada.