

## Ritvikism Hardens the Heart

By Mahatma Das

A devotee's faith in an advanced devotee is the most important proof of the qualification of his prospective guru. Faith allows him to know, understand, and measure the standard of a person's qualification. This explains why those who lack the faith that Prabhupada wanted his disciples to be gurus cannot understand that advanced disciples of Prabhupada are qualified to be guru (despite the fact that he said that one who says that guru only means siksa guru is foolish, one should not perpetually remain a student, and what will please me most is when all my disciples become guru).

Srila Prabhupada once asked the devotees, "How do you know Krsna is God?" They gave all the right sastric answers but he rejected all of them. Then a devotee said, "Because you can feel it," meaning you can feel His presence through bhakti. Prabhupada said, "This is the real answer."

This means, then, that the *sastras* are not the ultimate proof. The *sastras* describe the qualifications of a guru, but ultimately the devotee must hear from his heart to know who is his guru. Your heart will say, "When I hear from this person, I feel closer to Krsna, inspired to serve, and willing to sacrifice myself for service. I trust this person. I want to serve this person. I have deep affection for this person. I trust this person can take me back to Godhead." In the end, this is why you choose a particular person as your guru.

Of course, you are not just choosing anyone sentimentally. You know where to look for a guru, you know the symptoms and qualifications of a guru. But ultimately your heart will speak to you saying, "This person inspires me to such an extreme degree that I want to dedicate my life to him." In other words, the disciple will understand from the inner core of his heart who is his guru.

Ritviks suppress these natural emotions. They don't want these sentiments to rise; if they do, devotees will naturally want to find shelter in a living guru. They thus they preach about guru tattva in a way that suppress the essence of bhakti, the natural deep affectionate relationship between guru and disciple.

Ritviks don't understand - or refuse to recognize - the subjective nature of guru/disciple relationships. They despise the affection that disciples show to present day gurus. Thus, they despise the essence of Krsna consciousness, faith in guru, and guise such feelings in so called devotion to Prabhupada. This is a travesty to our sampradaya. To preach in a way that does not allow love to develop for a potential living diksa guru is a criminal act.

Because selecting a guru is subjective, no one can say that a strict and dedicated follower of Srila Prabhupada is not your guru. The disciple makes his own informed decision. He studies sastra, he learns the qualities and qualifications of the guru, he studies a prospective guru, and then he decides.

The person who inspires one devotee will not necessarily inspire another in the same way. That is the nature of guru tattva, and this is why it is said that guru tattva is inconceivable. It may be

inconceivable for one devotee that another devotee takes full shelter in their guru because that guru's effulgence is not seen equally by all. Just look at how many godbrothers did not see Prabhupada's effulgence, yet his effulgence was obvious to us. So when we say a guru is a pure devotee, it doesn't mean he will be viewed as a pure devotee to everyone. But certainly his disciples will see him this way.

Ritviks, have permanently blinded themselves, by their own philosophy, from seeing the effulgence of any guru other than Srila Prabhupada. And their mission, unfortunately, is to blind others.

Krsna Himself reveals the guru to a prospective candidate. Ritviks harden devotee's hearts to such a degree that they cannot see who is a guru. But worse, they have hardened their hearts in a way that causes such devotees to criticize gurus. A philosophy that produces so much criticism of others must be viewed with suspicion, since criticism has nothing to do with vaisnavism. If you have to base a philosophy upon criticizing devotees to win converts, obviously that philosophy is not Krsna conscious.

The Back to Prabhupada magazine, the main preaching arm of the ritvik movement, is grounded in criticism. Vaisnava philosophy is grounded in appreciation. The hypocrisy is obvious. A doctrine which needs to gather its power and authenticity from criticism of Prabhupada's disciples has nothing to do with the standards of Vaisnavism.

Krsna chooses who will be guru and for whom. It is not a matter of voting a man to the post of guru, nor is the position of guru, as I mentioned, understandable by those who have no faith. The qualifications to understand the position of guru depends on *sraddha*, an individual's faith. If one has faith then the truth is revealed in their heart. There is no greater proof than this.

The ritviks therefore, to be successful, must break faith. They teach that no devotee in Iskcon has the qualifications and abilities to be diksa guru. They also break faith in Prabhupada's instruction that he wanted his disciples to be diksa gurus. If they can break this faith, through gross manipulation of Prabhupada's words and intentions, and through criticism of devotees, then devotees will buy into their ideas. In the name of faithfulness to Prabhupada, they destroy faith.

When this faith is lost, ritvikism appears to makes sense, and it also appears to be the real solution to Iskcon's problems. Yet it proposes to do so at the cost of undermining the very core of bhakti, faith. Thus, it is poison disguised as nectar.

It also attempts to separate faith in Prabhupada from faith in his senior disciples, something that Prabhupada never did, and something that Prabhupada continually preached against.

When one drinks this poison, the result is obvious: lack of faith in Prabhupada's senior disciples and criticism of their intentions in serving Prabhupada, both of which are characteristic attitudes of non-vaisnavas.

Ritvik philosophy reflects a complete misunderstanding - and negligence of - guru/disciple dynamics, dynamics which are at the heart of bhakti.

Ritvik is a heart hardening process. If ritviks do not hardened hearts, then the devotees they are trying to influence will naturally get much inspiration from Prabhupada's disciples and will want to take shelter and surrender to them. Otherwise, why is it that all over Iskcon devotees see the qualifications of gurus and desire their shelter and guidance, whereas in the ritvik camp this never happens. It cannot happen because the devotee's hearts have been so hardened by the ritvik philosophy that the natural love, inspiration and affection that should develop for the senior disciples of Prabhupada, devotees who are inspiring and guiding thousands of devotees back to Godhead, does not develop. Not only does it not develop, it often causes such devotees to make offences to those acting as guru. Is this not proof that ritvikism is is poisonous?

Many do not see this poison because it has been expertly packaged as love of Prabhupada. It is insidious. Unfortunately, those who drink ritvik philosophy don't realize how hard their hearts have become.

I suggest that anyone who has been exposed to ritvikism look at the condition of their heart to see if they have been affected in the ways I describe above.