

According to ISKCON policy all candidates for initiation must understand clearly the following principles. Please learn them carefully.

1. Qualifications of a bona fide Spiritual Master:-

- i) He must come in a bona fide disciplic succession.
- ii) He must know the science of pure devotion to Lord Krishna.
- iii) He must be learned in the Vedic Literature & be able to convince others about the Vedic conclusions.
- iv) He must be self-controlled.
- v) He must teach by his personal example.

2. Need for accepting a bona fide Spiritual Master:-

- i) It is the verdict of the Vedic Scripture that to understand Vedic knowledge & to realize the Truth one must approach a spiritual master.
- ii) Only by following the order of such a bona fide spiritual master can one solve the problems of material existence and attain pure devotion to Lord Krishna, which is the perfection of life.
- iii) To emphasize this point even the Lord accepts a spiritual master when He descends into this material world.

3. Worship of the Spiritual Master:-

The spiritual master is not God, but he is to be worshipped like God because he is the representative of God. Only by his grace can we attain the perfection of life. Krishna is very pleased when the spiritual master is properly served and worshiped. Therefore, one worships the spiritual master.

4. The bona fide Spiritual Master speaks the Absolute Truth:-

The bona fide spiritual master teaches strictly according to the Vedic injunctions and the examples of the previous acaryas. In fact, he simply

repeats what has already been spoken in the parampara. Thus we must understand that such a bona fide spiritual master speaks the Absolute Truth.

5. [If the spiritual master concocts a speculative philosophy contrary to Srila Prabhupada's teachings or if he is breaking the four regulative principles and does not rectify himself according to GBC guidelines, he should no longer be accepted as a bona fide spiritual master.]

6. Qualifications and responsibilities of a disciple:-

- i) He must hear and inquire from the spiritual master.
- ii) He must be submissive and humble.
- iii) He must serve the spiritual master.
- iv) He must satisfy and please the spiritual master.
- v) He must strictly follow the instructions of the spiritual master. At the time of initiation, he must vow to chant at least sixteen rounds of Hare Krishna mahamantra everyday and to follow the four regulative principles of no meat eating, no intoxication, no illicit sex and no gambling.
- vi) He must have faith in the spiritual master.
- vii) He must honor and respect the spiritual master as a representative of God.

7. Srila Prabhupada's Unique Position:-

- i) Srila Prabhupada's contribution to the preaching mission of Lord Caitanya is historic and unprecedented. Due to his efforts the cult of pure Krishna bhakti has spread to every corner of the globe.
- ii) As the Founder Acarya of ISKCON, he will always remain the most prominent siksa guru in the institution, uniting not only those who have accepted diksa from him directly, but also all succeeding generations of disciples. As a testimony to this fact, all ISKCON devotees gather together every morning to offer Guru-puja to Srila Prabhupada.

Furthermore, his books will be the beaconlight and law books for us for the next ten thousand years.

8. Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead:-

We accept Lord Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead because this is the verdict of the Vedic scriptures. Furthermore, the great sages of the past like Narada, Asita etc. have also declared this fact. And finally, in Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna Himself makes the same declaration.

Lord Krishna is the source of everything, material and spiritual. He is the source of all incarnations and also the source of all the demigods. The demigods are never to be equated with the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna. The demigods are always subordinate to Lord Krishna and they are his faithful servants.

Worship of Lord Krishna in pure devotion is the perfection of life and there is no need to separately worship the demigods. The example is given that by watering the root of a tree, the whole tree is nourished automatically and there is no need to separately water the leaves and branches. So also, devotees of Lord Krishna understand that worship of Krishna, who is the source of everything, is perfect and complete in itself and there is no need for any other kind of worship.

9. The four regulative principles:-

Bona fide religion rests upon four pillars, namely – mercy, austerity, cleanliness and truthfulness. There are four activities which destroy these four pillars. They are respectively: meat eating, intoxication, illicit sex and gambling. Therefore, these activities are called the four pillars of sinful life.

For one who wants to develop pure love of God, one must avoid these sinful activities. Otherwise, one will not be able to make progress on the path of Krishna Consciousness.

10. Chanting Hare Krishna:-

The Vedic Scriptures declare that chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord is the only way to realize God in this age of Kali. Lord Caitanya, quoting from the Kalisantarana Upanisad, has instructed us to specifically chant the Hare Krishna mahamantra to attain the perfection of life. Therefore, everyone, regardless of their material designation, must take to this process of chanting Hare Krishna.

11. GBC Body:-

Even when he was physically present on this planet, Srila Prabhupada oversaw the formation of a Governing Body Commission (GBC) that would help him to manage ISKCON affairs in his presence and which would be his representative body after his departure. In accordance with Srila Prabhupada's desire, the GBC is now the ultimate managing and spiritual authority in ISKCON and it has the responsibility to steer the movement through these turbulent times according to the principles of guru, sadhu and sastra.

12. Body and Self:-

The body is a temporary perishable structure made up of eight material elements, earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego.

The self or the spirit soul, on the other hand, is a spiritual entity distinct from the body. It is eternal, full of knowledge and full of bliss.

13. ISKCON:-

ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) is the institution founded by Srila Prabhupada to spread the message of Krishna Consciousness all over the world. Srila Prabhupada said that ISKCON was his body and that all devotees should work co-operatively together to fulfill the mission for which he gave his life. So by staying in ISKCON and serving according to Srila Prabhupada's desire, we will express our gratitude to him for what he has done and also, we can become humble instruments in Lord Caitanya's mission to transform the world.