

VAISHNAVI MINISTRY 2026 STATEMENT ON VAISHNAVI DIKSA GURUS

We at the Vaishnavi Ministry have noted with concern the continuing rift within ISKCON over the issue of Vaishnavi Diksa Gurus. Although we are aware that some of our supporters wanted us to issue an immediate statement after the last resolution the GBC issued on this topic, we felt it important to deeply consider what kind of statement would be helpful at this time. We represent the worldwide community of Vaishnavis. There is no one monolithic “Vaishnavi” perspective on this question.

That said, we believe that Vaishnavis, in their unique role as the mothers of this society, have an important perspective to offer. We issue this statement, not to move our society closer to any particular outcome, but in the hope that our viewpoint will ease the way to a solution that protects ISKCON and all our devotees.

We note first that the question of whether Vaishnavis will be able to give diksa initiation in ISKCON has not yet been resolved. The current resolution is a stop-gap measure designed to provide additional time for a topic that ISKCON has been debating for over 20 years.

We further note that it is a fundamental tenet of Gaudiya-Vaishnava philosophy that anyone, regardless of gender, the caste into which one is born, or other bodily considerations can become a pure servant of Krishna. Such spiritual perfection results from the process of bhakti yoga. Srila Prabhupada made it clear that all his followers are eligible for this perfection. One need not be Jahnava devi or Nityananda prabhu to reach perfection and guide others back to Krishna. To believe otherwise is to doubt Srila Prabhupada and the power of the process he gave us.

In any philosophical debate, one can use scripture to support one’s position. The fact that a particular quotation supports or does not support the ability of Vaishnavis to give diksa will not be determinative in resolving this question. We do note three overarching considerations on the philosophical on the topic of diksa by Vaishnavis:

1. The Sastric Advisory Committee, the body which has been charged with researching philosophic topics and advising our GBC on the same has concluded that there is no philosophical bar to Vaishnavi Diksa Gurus. Their conclusion remains unchanged for almost 20 years.
2. The arguments concluding that Vaishnavi gurus cannot ever give diksa are largely drawn from the same philosophical sources which would conclude that those born in non-brahmin families can never become brahmins. In other words, these sources give weight to bodily considerations that Gaudiya Vaishnavism has rejected.
3. The most recent GBC resolution permits siksa initiation by Vaishnavis and acknowledges that there is no fundamental difference between the level of realization required to give siksa initiation and that required to give diksa initiation.

These three points lead us to the conclusion that, if there is a bar to Vaishnavis acting as diksa gurus, it is based on social or other considerations and not on a Vaishnavi's ability to become a fully realized practitioner of bhakti.

That said, we realize that the philosophical question may not appear so clear to many devotees as it appears to us. We further acknowledge that resolving the philosophical debate, even if it were possible to do so, would not resolve the ultimate question of whether ISKCON should permit Vaishnavis to initiate.

Our perspective is that the very deep cultural divide in ISKCON is at the root of our inability to resolve this issue. Unfortunately, many involved in this debate are not willing to separate cultural issues from philosophical issues, continuing to conflate the two. This issue will not be resolved until our community can acknowledge and accept that we are a *multicultural* movement. Srila Prabhupada instructed us to accept the principle of unity in diversity. As a ministry, we conclude that cultural variations in how bhakti yoga is practiced within our institution are a strength and not a weakness.

One thing that has become clear in the debate following the recent GBC resolution, however, is that there are practitioners on both sides of this issue with deeply held concerns about how Vaishnavi gurus will affect our ability to spread bhakti-yoga. For those who believe that they just have to keep arguing to bring the entire community around to their way of thinking, we believe that you are doing a disservice to Srila Prabhupada's movement.

This issue can only be resolved by compromise on the implementation of how Vaishnavis give initiation in our movement. Multiple compromises have been accepted over the years. From our perspective, the 2019 resolution (currently in abeyance) which permits Vaishnavis to give diksa in limited geographical regions is an elegant solution to this problem. Ultimately, however, we do not insist on any particular outcome.

We do, however, request of the Vaishnava community consideration of the following three principles as debate on this issue continues:

1. Acknowledgement of the well-established principle that Vaishnavis can become fully realized bhakti practitioners who are fully qualified to guide others and connect them with our spiritual lineage so they may ultimately become pure servants of Krishna.
2. Recognition that everyone involved in this debate is a member of Srila Prabhupada's family and should be treated with respect in both our public *and private* discussions of this topic. The consciousness we bring to this discussion is just as important, perhaps more important, than the actual words we speak. When we denigrate devotees, even in our minds, we bring the wrong consciousness to this discussion.
3. Understanding that refusal to compromise will not "preserve the purity" of Srila Prabhupada's movement. It will cause ISKCON to splinter. We are convinced that all ISKCON members deeply love Srila Prabhupada. If a devotee finds him or herself taking

a position that the GBC/ISKCON *must* adhere to their understanding on the topic of whether Vaishnavis can give diksa, we call on that devotee to please consider how we as a movement can move forward together. This is the mindset that we believe is most pleasing to our Founder-Acarya.

A last thought on social media. We are conducting this discussion in full public view. We ask each devotee to remember that everything we say about ISKCON and about each other becomes part of our outreach to those who are new to or unfamiliar with Krishna consciousness. Please let us speak kindly and respectfully to each other as we move forward on this complicated issue.