

# Who Is a Bona Fide Founder-Ācārya?

All ISKCON devotees know the term “Founder-Ācārya”, but how many of us understand the full meaning of it? That it does not just indicate a title, but signifies a transcendental system — one that has been utilized by such Vaiṣṇava stalwarts as Śrī Rāmānujācārya and Śrī Madhvācārya to facilitate the mass liberation of conditioned souls in Kali-yuga. Śrīla Prabhupāda, being Mahāprabhu’s *senāpati-bhakta*, introduced the same system, for the same reason.

## The Five Characteristics of a Bona Fide Founder-Ācārya

The five characteristics of a bona fide Founder-Ācārya are found in “*Prapannāmṛta Tapana*”, a scripture from the Śrī Sampradaya that discusses the Founder-Ācārya system. By reading these we can easily understand Śrīla Prabhupāda’s very elevated position and his first class credentials. We can also easily ascertain who is not qualified for the position.

The Five Characteristics of a Bona Fide Founder-Ācārya Are:

- 1) He is *udhārika* — the savior of everyone. Those who come after him are called *upakārika* — his helpers. They are never to be equated with the Founder-Ācārya.
- 2) He is *dinābhaya* — (*dīna* - very fallen; *abhaya* - to remove fear, become fearless) — He removes the fear of all fallen souls by his teachings. Anyone who takes shelter of them will become fearless.
- 3) He gives purports to those scriptures containing Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* e.g. *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and he makes such purports available to the world. Such books are called *mahā-granths*.
- 4) He also gives purports to the songs of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*.
- 5) His very name becomes identified with the philosophy of Lord Viṣṇu Himself, for such is his transparency and potency.