

Priti-laksanam

A Forum for Vaisnava Discussion
Volume 6, April 1993

"Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one's mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, accepting *prasada* and offering *prasada* are the six symptoms of love [*priti-laksanam*] shared by one devotee and another."

— *Nectar of Instruction*, Text Four

Dedicated to
His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
— Founder-*Acarya* of the
International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Articles and letters appearing in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher. *Priti-laksanam* is an internal publication, not intended for public distribution. Send all correspondence to *Priti-laksanam*, Box 1952, Alachua, FL 32615.

Contents

Notes from the Editor	1
Personals	2
Ads	2

LETTERS

Voice the Opinions of the People— Bhakta Greg Stefani	3
Benefitting from the Association— Sastra Rupa devi dasi	3
I Pray the Newsletter Grows —Wallace Dorian	3
In Need of More Association— Dhira dasi	3
Sadhu-sanga—Jagadisvara & Rupa Manjari	3
As I Recall It—Gargamuni dasa	3
Refreshing Signs of Maturity— Dr. Kenneth Rose	4
Thank You for the Forum— Rasamanjari dasi	4
Real Growth is Organic—Kaviraja Goswami dasa	4
I Support the Editorial Policy— Datta dasa	4
Enlivened to Correct Problems— Bob Fish	4
Change by Chanting Hare Krsna— Dayananda dasa	4
No Need to be Topical— Dhanesvara dasa	4
Confront Our Problems— Lila-sakti dasi	5
I Doubted At First—Krsna-kumari5 Move Ahead with the Editorial Policies—Jaya Madhava dasa	5

ESSAYS

Damsels in Distress Ask, "Where Are Our Knights in Shining Armour?"— Sita dasi	5
What's the Difference?—Datta dasa First We Have to Know Ourselves—	

Nirmala Candra dasa	9
Unusual Types of Devotees That Krsna Loves Anyway— Dasaratha-suta dasa	10
Submission and Surrender— Dhanesvara dasa	10
Grhastha Weekend Gathering— Brajendranandana dasa	11
Husbands in the Vedic Age— Rohinandanana dasa	11
A Gismo View of Ladies— Hanumantpresaka Swami	12

RESPONSES TO ARTICLES IN PREVIOUS ISSUES

In Response To "Same-Sex Pairing" (Vol. 4)—Anonymous	13
In Response to "A Birthday Prayer" (Vol 5)—Ragatmika dasi	13
In Response to "Ecstatic Women, Stand Back!" (Vol. 5)—Urmila dasi14 —Teresa	14
—Syama-kunda dasi	15
In Response to "ISKCON's Teenage Dilemma" (Vol. 4)—Pancavati dasi16	

NECTAR SECTION

Life of Jahnava Ma	16
Madhurya-kadambini	17
Notable Quote	18

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Notes from the Editor

As articles come in I usually read through them, so before I sit down to layout an issue I know what the themes are. This time I didn't review the material until I had it all in front of me, and I was surprised (and a bit apprehensive) that this issue focuses significantly on women in Krsna consciousness.

I was surprised because I thought

we had enough topics on the table that the issues of the newsletter would remain varied; apprehensive because I don't want the readers to be disappointed.

But I'm not controlling the content of the newsletter. As Dhanesvara writes, "*Priti-laksanam* seems to be more oriented toward the activities in the personal lives of the devotees." So what has come out is what's on devotees' minds around the world. Let's hear these devotees earnestly and openly, trying to understand their hearts. This will make for substantial exchanges between us. With these thoughts I dropped my apprehension and surprise. Like you, I am a reader and listener, and this is what the devotees want to talk about.

Another emerging topic I hear devotees talking about continually now is reuniting our family. *Priti-laksanam* is trying to reach out to those who have moved outside ISKCON. Please share it with friends. Also share with them the rising energy of Srila Prabhupada's Centennial celebration. Here's a way we can all make our connection to Srila Prabhupada stronger by making some offering to him on his hundredth anniversary. One need not be connected to a large program or live near a temple. Plan now to demonstrate your dedication to Prabhupada, and share your ideas with the Centennial Committee. Or if you have questions Write Ramiya dasa at ISKCON Dallas or Naveen Krsna dasa at Box 1119, Alachua, FL 32615.

My special thanks to Laksmi-mani Prabhhu for helping with this issue by keying in all the articles. Remember, we

prefer to receive your submission on disk.—IBM or MAC format; 5.25" or 3.5" disks; ASCII or word processing program.

Subscriptions to *Priti-laksanam* are free. Send your name and address, and I'll include you on the mailing list. Donations are gladly accepted (this is an expensive enterprise!). Back issues are available for \$1.00 each (five issues to date). Personal advertisements are \$1.00 each issue they appear in. I welcome advertisers (no display ads) at \$.50 a word. Please include payment with your order.

The following devotees helped make this issue of *Priti-laksanam* possible. Thank you very much:

Catura dasi, San Diego	\$10.00
Hare Krsna dasa, Canada	\$5.00
Nirguna dasa, Murari	\$5.00
Kimberly, Florida	\$10.00
Jagadisvara dasa, Ohio	\$10.00
Krsna kumari dasi, LA	\$12.00
Ragatmika dasi, LA	\$6.00
Devala Rsi dasa, MS	\$10.00
Sastra rupa dasi, Malaysia	\$10.00
Kalki dasa, SC	\$10.00
Dr. Kenneth Rose, VA	\$3.00
Yogesvara dasa, NY	\$50.00
Mahavegavati dasi, NY	\$10.00
Lilavati dasi, Chicago	\$4.00
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Datta dasa, Oregon	\$15.00
Dhira dasi, Oregon	\$10.00
Sadhusangananda dasa, Vienna	\$15.00
Krsna dasa, Canada	\$5.00
Maheyja dasa, PA	\$30.00
Ambarisa & Svaha, Florida	\$11.00
Arjuna dasa, NY	\$20.00
Paramatma dasa, CA	\$10.00
Brenda Cassini, Atlanta	\$20.00
Karttika dasi, Baltimore	\$8.00
Sanjay Bhalodia	\$20.00
Anonymous, San Diego	\$20.00

If I forgot anyone this time please forgive me. Our move left things somewhat disarrayed.

PERSONALS

English devotee lady 31, (joined in 1982) interested in personal growth through creativity, healing and honest, open communication that compliments Krsna consciousness. Looking for a partner with similar interests who is tired of stereotyped role-playing and seeking a committed, honest relationship. Please write to me c/o C. Lewis at 74, Kilburn Square, Kilburn, London NW6 6PN, England.

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Ten-year devotee, early thirties, never married. Tall, attractive, quiet, employed. Seeks chaste, intelligent girl in her twenties. Write me c/o of my sister: Pamela Theimann, 5319 Paradise Lane, Fort Collins, CO 80526.

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Friend invites correspondence for Prabhupada disciple (never married) from attractive girls (22-32), serious about spiritual life. Send recent photo and birth data to: 3744 Watseka Avenue #6, Los Angeles, CA 90034.

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Female disciple of Srila Prabhupada seeks a relationship with mature, emotionally healthy male devotee who is interested in real relating, getting in touch, self-expression, becoming a whole person, cultivating a Vaisnava heart and developing real love for one another, Krsna, Srila Prabhupada and all living entities. Not interested in stereotype acting, judgmentalism, or false pretenses of standards. Write to: Therese c/o my friend Kalakanti devi dasi, 210 Ross St., Cambridge CB1 3BT, United Kingdom.

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Krsna conscious wife wanted, 18 to 38. Remote rural situation. I am non-macho, wholistic, growth-oriented and into *yoga*. I'm a massage therapist, musician, home-owner and loving. Devotee of Krsna, disciple of Srila Prabhupada. For photo and details write Peter Levine, 511 Westwood Circle, Belgrade, MT 59714, USA.

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38-year old female devotee, disciple of Satsvarupa Maharaja. A little overweight; excellent cook; great sense of humor. Joined ISKCON in 1978; from Belgium but speaks fluent English. Hoping to meet a mature male devotee to start family. Willing to travel. Contact Purnamasi dasi, 15 Goodge Place, London W1, England.

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38 year old mature male disciple of Srila Prabhupada seeks Krsna conscious wife. I am a homeowner and landowner in a rural Vaisnava community and

gainfully employed. Involved in personal growth, healing arts, and developing heartfelt relationships with devotees. Write me c/o F. Kress 379 61st St. Oakland, CA 94618

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Brahmana father 37, white, one child. Seeks marriagable female devotee or single mother. Am easy to please, good manager, organizer, handyman. Prabhupada initiated. Can relocate. Call or write Arjuna dasa c/o A.J. Fiocco Box 160-239, Brooklyn. N.Y. 11215.

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Male disciple of Prabhupada, self-employed professional, joined ISKCON in '73. Seeking gentle, intelligent, educated, ?, single lady devotee. Reply c/o Krsna dasa, 1115-C Austin Ave, Coquitcam, B.C. Canada, V3K3P4

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Lone preacher seeks association/preaching partner (M or F) to be able to continue to enthusiastically using her skills on behalf of Prabhupada's movement. 15 year devotee, history of making devotees/initiating preaching programs. Program established/developing, but willing to consider relocating. Reply: Dhira dasi, 2368 NW Thurman St, Portland, OR 97210.

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Friendship and possible marriage desired from female devotees, age 20-28. Must be honest, faithful, tolerant, simple, open-minded, easy to get along with, and like cooking. Education, money, looks, etc., unimportant. I am well educated and financially secure. Reply to: Box 1422, Cary, NC 27511.

ADS

Friends of Lord Krsna (F.O.L.K.) Northern California gathers every month with potluck vegetarian feast, offerings, *kirtana* and *Bhagavad-gita* class with ISKCON speaker. 3322 16th Street #1, San Francisco. For information contact Vasu (510) 447-6437 or Gabhira (415) 558-8863. Come and meet friends of Krsna. Saturdays. 6pm.

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A great lady, disciple of Srila

Prabhupada. Devoted wife and mother of two young children needs volunteer assistance for periods of one week (or more) for fighting a life-threatening illness. Can you help? Northern California area. Contact Rasamanjari dasi (209) 634-5976.

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New tapes from Mahatma dasa. *Heart & Soul*, beautifully orchestrated melodies for the *maha-mantra*. *Siksastaka* and other prayers. *Higher Dimensions*, live modern melodious *kirtanas* with KrishnaFest band. Plus other tapes from Sounds Divine: *Our Only Shelter*; *Your Life Will be Sublime*; *Brahma Samhita*; *Isopanisad*; all with Mahatma dasa. *The Magic is the Chanting* by KrishnaFest; and *Eternal Bliss* by Lokanatha Swami. Digitally recorded and mastered. \$5.95 each. \$6.95 overseas. Payable to KrishnaFest, 5430 Gurley Avenue, Dallas, TX 75223. Phone (214) 827-6330.

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Attend the Conference on "Relationships Among Devotees". Saturday and Sunday, May 1 thru 2, 1993, American Legion Hall, 1105 North Topanga Blvd., Topanga, California. Direct inquiries to Dhanesvara dasa at ISKCON Vancouver.

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Social issues? Family values? Community and economic development? Your concerns are our agenda! *ISKCON World Review*, P.O. Box 238, Alachua, FL 32615-0238, USA. Phone: 904-462-5054; Fax 904-462-5056. To subscribe to 12 issues: US First Class \$18, US Third Class \$10; other \$20.

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I am trying to establish a Prabhupada museum here in Vienna. We welcome anyone who is interested in selling; buying; or exchanging Prabhupada nectar, such as first-edition books, personal belongings, documents, handwritings, BTC's, etc. No item too small or too big. Please contact. Sadhusangananda dasa, Rosenackerstrasse, Vienna.

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Stay in touch with the continuing progress in Mayapur. The *Mayapur Journal* is published quarterly and available by writing P.O. Box 4742, 6304

Zug, Switzerland. The cost of a subscription is US\$12.00 a year.

LETTERS

Voice the Opinions of the People

Bhakta Greg Stefani
Coral Gables, Florida

I have very much enjoyed reading *Priti-laksanam*, Vol.5. The format of your publication is bold and right to the point. I appreciate the open and truthful type of writing found in the articles. Most of us in the Broward County area visit the temple in Miami, but don't fully agree with all of their policies. The Miami temple has made unbelievable progress since Kalakantha reorganized and set its direction on a new path. But still there is no major devotee or *guru* to oversee the area, and as a result there sometimes (although infrequent) are instances where the management has dropped the ball so to speak.

This affects the immediate area devotees and also the outside lying area of devotees. As a result there is practically no way for the outside area devotees to voice their opinions, favorable or unfavorable. I think your publication is an opportunity for any devotee to be heard, and even if not heard, to at least outpour his/her feelings.

Benefitting from the Association

Sastra Rupa devi dasi
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

I just wanted to say that it has been very enlivening reading the past issues of *Priti-laksanam* and I have benefitted from the association with devotees that it provides. I also showed them to my mother and sister (who are also my Godsisters) and they also feel the same. The women in Krsna consciousness issue seems to be a global one—many of us here can identify with, having been through some pretty frustrating and sad situations. However it is heartening to know that there are quite a number of Prabhus who do not suffer from the sex disease and can accept and treat us as fellow aspiring Vaisnavas/Vaisnavis.

All the other articles and letters are very thought-provoking, educative, and some inspiring too.

I Pray The Newsletter Grows

Wallace Dorian
Culver City, Ca

I agree with every issue you seek to

address in your zeal to bring devotees closer together, and I pray that your newsletter grows and grows. It is very bold. But you must press on with your vision. In the end, we'll succeed. I never met Srila Prabhupada, but my rule of thumb is, "What would he say today if he were among us?" The answer: Just keep chanting, don't worry. He was very pragmatic and pure, and that's what's missing from ISKCON right now. We want to follow, be attracted to that pure soul, somewhere, anywhere. And the moon will rise again.

In Need of More Association

Dhira devi dasi
Portland, Or

I was thrilled and relieved to read the various articles, as this fills a space in my life which is in dire need of more association. I appreciate the mood generated by the letters and essays, as it is sincere and thoughtful, filled with courage of how to face the difficult task of improving ourselves as devotees, individually and collectively.

Sadhu-sanga

Jagadisvara & Rupa Manjari
Chardon, Oh

We all have heard about the essential importance of the holy name, *sankirtana-yajna*. *Hari-nama* is stated as the primary activity in devotional service. The only principle more glorified by the *acaryas* is *sadhu-sanga*. It is even stated that one's chanting will not have effect without *sadhu-sanga*. The *sadhu* is the door to the spiritual world. It is exclusively he who plants the seed of *bhakti*; Krsna has delegated this function exclusively to His pure devotees. We are personalists. This is *bhagavata-dharma*, as quoted on your newsletterhead, *The Nectar of Instruction*, Text Four. May your publication live up to this glorious standard.

As I Recall It

Gargamuni dasa
USA Traveling Sankirtana

I would like to respond to Kundali dasa's comments regarding myself instituting the idea that women should be in the back of the temple. This was started in Mayapur by Bhavananda. Devotees were complaining in Mayapur that they could not see the Deities during *arati*, because hundreds of Bengali women stood in the front next to the Deities. They used to cause quite a disturbance especially since they were not wearing *choli's* or shirts. This was the only reason I'm aware of for

having women in the rear in Mayapur. I did not institute this practice in New York; our devotees wear *cholis*! Perhaps Bhavananda did tell female devotees to remain in the rear, I do not know. However, I did not.

Refreshing Signs of Maturity

Dr. Kenneth Rose
Newport News, VA

I found the contents of the issue (#5) to be of great interest. It certainly is a wave of fresh air and far more interesting than BTG or IWR. I would like to be placed on your permanent mailing list.

I am a former devotee—or better, a former member of ISKCON. I was initiated by Prabhupada in 1970. I am the second person Prabhupada initiated with the name Karnamrta dasa. I continue to remain interested in the development of the various Gaudiya Vaisnava movements in this country. It is heartening to see signs of spiritual maturity in ISKCON, one of which is open discussion of issues once thought settled forever.

Thank You for the Forum

Rasamanjari devi dasi
Turlock, Ca

Naturally, when I received my Volume 5 *Priti-laksanam*, I studied the three responses to my article "Same-sex Pairing in Krsna Consciousness." I got the feeling that those devotees didn't put much value on my experience and views. However, the entire magazine was full of wonderful (& humorous) expression of individuality; experience; willingness to share and grow and offer some special insight. It is most encouraging and attractive as it shows we are maturing in our spiritual life. Your notes on the editorial policy were very strong and enlivening. Thank you for this forum.

Real Growth is Organic

Kaviraja Goswami dasa
Concord, Ca

I strongly believe that in order for any type of real growth to be genuine, it must also be organic, step by step, according to our actual pragmatic capacity for understanding. Although certainly this is not the first-class system of education, most of us seem to learn best from the experience of our own mistakes in the school of hard knocks. I wholeheartedly support your editorial policy and must once again express my profuse gratitude at the forum for heartfelt discussion which you have so kindly provided for all

devotees earnestly seeking the truth.

I joined the movement in 1976 at the age of 17, when misogyny was in full swing. Women were automatically looked upon in a most disrespectful and derogatory manner. Being that I was young and impressionable I quickly learned then from my seniors in ISKCON how to disrespect women as no more than the physical representation of *maya*. They may as well have not had a soul, as if their only purpose was for the exploitation of males. "Give the dog a bad name and hang her."

Srila Prabhupada was grossly quoted out of context in order to bully women devotees into a submissive meekness wherein they might be more easily exploited (for usually irreligious ends). Fortunately, by the grace of God manifest through awakened personal thought, I was rescued from such a grave misunderstanding of Vaisnavism many years ago. I came to see that such a regressive attitude toward lady Vaisnavas was certainly due to a materialistic conception of Krsna consciousness based upon the misconstrued permanent designation of the soul's present material encasement.

To abuse the superexcellent philosophy of Krsna consciousness in this way to is most certainly not looked upon at all favorably by the Supreme Lord and subsequently must fall in the category of Vaisnava *aparadha*. I am personally very sorry to see that many of those in leadership positions in ISKCON seem to lack this elemental insight and consequently many nice Vaisnava ladies have been discouraged and leave the Society of devotees and sometimes, even more unfortunately, feel perhaps somewhat justifiably compelled to leave Krsna consciousness altogether.

Suffice it to say that from reading your newsletter my heart is filled with hope that the incomplete reform which began within the Society of devotees many years ago will continue.

I Support the Editorial Policy

Datta dasa

Oregon City, OR

I would like to support the decisions you have made, like printing Rasamanjari's letter, the concept of devotee personal ads, not accepting homosexual personal ads, etc. I think you've shown excellent judgement in these matters.

Enlivened by the Concern to Correct Problems

Bob Fish

New Brunswick, NJ

I was writing in hope to receive a copy of *Priti-laksanam*. I used to live in a temple but moved out due to a family crisis. Since that time I've found myself very critical towards ISKCON on the women's issues. I am enlivened by the concern to correct these problems. Thank you for doing something to help change this.

Change by Chanting Hare Krsna

Dayananda dasa
Germantown, MD

I am also eager to contribute my opinions to your forum. I have some opinions about education, Prabhupada, devotee relationships, women's role, and various preaching strategies. I do not exactly have strong opinions about *guru* issues, GBC, and some other highly controversial items.

In other words I am eager to voice some opinions and ideas to foster introspection. I'm doubtful about reform and revolution. I find that radical and strongly critical movements tend to be less effective. It is impossible to change a leopard's spots, or tiger's stripes. However, by chanting Hare Krsna, and performing *sadhana-bhakti* sincerely, one can gradually change from a crow to a swan. Srila Prabhupada was quite proud of this fact.

Devotees and scholars are usually eager to argue and discuss points of scripture. Prabhupada mentions this in the *Bhagavatam* in conjunction with Daksa's sacrifice, where Lord Siva was not invited. Since we aspirant devotees have a need to associate and make various exchanges (*priti-laksanam*), I would also like to associate with you and your readers.

No Need to be Topical

Dhanesvara dasa
Burnaby, Canada

I just read the latest *Priti-laksanam* and found it very inspiring and sometimes sad. I feel strongly that *Priti-laksanam* is performing a valuable service by allowing the world-wide body of devotees to witness the genuine feelings and thoughts of the many devotees who write in. Please continue this valuable service.

Regarding topical issues in *Priti-laksanam*. I say don't do it. Life just doesn't happen in a topical way. *Priti-laksanam* seems to be more oriented toward the activities in the personal lives of the devotees. In fact, it is the only personal publication we have, and for that reason, very valuable. Keep it

that way. If someone wants to write in about any of those topics they are free to at any time.

Confront Our Problems

Lila-sakti dasi
Berkeley, CA

I am a married mother with a three-year-old daughter. My family and I regularly worship at the Berkeley temple.

During the last twenty-four months, three devotee children were sexually assaulted, one of them on the temple premises. In each case, the assailant was a devotee, either a *bhakta* or an initiated disciple.

In each case, the temple authorities innocently gave the assailant free access to the temple. In each case, people allowed the child to be left alone on the temple premises without any parental or adult supervision. In each case, the child's parents were either separated or divorced.

These three incidents are not isolated incidents. Divorce, child neglect and abuse, devotee-on-devotee crime, and poor temple management are commonplace in ISKCON. These are problems which can no longer be "swept under the rug" or rationalized away with armchair philosophizing. We must confront them. ISKCON's mission, our collective mission, is to build an exemplary spiritual society.

How can we do that, how can we be an example to the nondevotees—if we ourselves are plagued with divorce, broken families, abused children, crime, and poor government?

We must confront our social problems which are the symptoms of our collective spiritual problems. I urge *Priti-laksanam* to devote attention to these problems. I urge all devotees to do the same.

I believe that if we work together we can develop a practical spiritually-guided social ethic which will strengthen our marriages and families, protect all of our children, stop the devotee-on-devotee crime, and improve the administration of our temples.

I Doubted At First
Krsna-kumari dasi
Los Angeles, Ca

When you came out with the first issue of *Priti-laksanam* I sat on the sidelines and watched like the observers looking at the Wright brothers: "Will it fly?" I wasn't sure you could get it up off the gripe level or up out of the "mud-slinging" arena. By the second issue, I could see the new little plane was being

fueled by more powerful writers with stronger internal combustion than I had envisioned. Hey, that little new comer is actually lifting off the ground! Third issue proved *Priti-laksanam* could get up high enough to retract its wheels and kiss the ground goodbye. Now with this new forth issue you've won your "wings." Congratulations on bringing about a wonderful forum.

Move Ahead with the Editorial Policies

Jaya Madhava dasa
London, England

Thank you for your newsletter and caring enough about the outside community to take the trouble to do this service. Don't give up! I encourage all devotees outside to participate in *Priti-laksanam*.

It's unfortunate there are accusations of bad taste because women are placing ads in your newsletter to find devotee husbands. It is this holier-than-thou-artificial-renunciation attitude that has hurt and alienated thousands from ISKCON. Some outside devotees feel discarded if unrealistic standards are expected from them by those in ISKCON who do not show interest in their material or spiritual welfare.

It's ironic that ISKCON pays more attention to political persons, rock stars, movie stars and new guests, than to those who gave service for many years and now live outside. I applaud your Personals column. Keep it going, it's long overdue and I appreciate you doing this for all the devotees, single, divorced, et. al. Kali-yuga has ruined everything. A woman shouldn't remarry but a *guru* shouldn't fall down either.

Let's be compassionate and flexible in our dealing with this problem. Let's help our brothers and sisters instead of criticizing them for their short comings.

ESSAYS

Damsels in Distress Ask,
"Where Are Our Knights
in Shining Armour?"

Sita devi dasi
London, England

I had an arranged marriage in the early '70s which lasted less than one year when my husband took *sannyasa*, leaving me more or less to fend for myself since then. I realise that not all devotee women have had that same situation, but many of my God sisters

from that same era have been abandoned by husbands who renounced them or just plain blooped. How women like me feel, as a result of the way we've been treated by the Society, may be a side of things you've perhaps never considered before, especially if you're a man, or even if you're a woman who's always been protected by a husband. You might not agree with all of the things I write here, but I'd ask you to try to read with an open mind and a generous heart.

It's All History

You may be tempted to dismiss everything I present here on the grounds that many of our predicaments happened over a decade ago, and now things are much different. Perhaps you might be assuaged to think that any of the men I might make reference to are no longer practising devotees. But I'm unable to honestly assure you that ISKCON has long rooted-out all these "offenders" and their "offenses." It is undeniably true that things are changing. But change is a slow and gradual process, one in which progress is measured in baby steps, not quantum leaps.

What's Our Problem?

While most of my God sister friends can't complain about starvation or torture, most of us have, each in very different ways and under different circumstances, received debilitating blows from the men in our Society. Physical weapons weren't used, but something far more subtle was: an attitude that has caused us, over repeated exposure to it, to feel as if we are not wanted within this Society. "Of course we want women to become Krsna conscious!" you may say indignantly. But yet, an altogether different message comes across in the behaviour patterns of many men. These messages have exerted a powerful psychological effect upon us; convinced us that we were not really wanted around, but that the men were simply tolerating our presence. Has that been healthy for us? Was it healthy for any of you? As a result of picking up these subtle and underlying messages from our brothers, have we developed into the gentle Vaisnavis Srila Prabhupada would want us to be? Have we contributed as much as we could have to Srila Prabhupada's movement?

What Is It That We Want?

Mostly we just want to be treated like persons. But are women not already being treated this way? Surely we distributed books side-by-side with you, we cooked feasts just as you did,

we worshipped the Deities and attended lectures as you did, and now in some places we are allowed to give classes or lead *kirtanas* again.

However, what I'm talking about here are the unique qualities that women possess and which I feel we are failing to value. Generally we protect something which we consider precious. Do many of us not feel protected because we're not respected? As a result of having her feminine qualities denigrated, a woman is not likely to value herself as a woman. She will see herself lacking, inferior. This confuses her, but it confirms what she has observed: That women have no intrinsic value of their own. She buys into that myth and internalises a feeling of self-loathing. Her only option for recovering any sense of self-esteem is to identify with masculine values. Thus our Society lacks important feminine values that could balance the masculine values we have focused on. This also has a backlash, affecting her concept of herself as a woman, and leading her to devalue other women. Yet women will never be men, and it is my contention that most of the women who are trying to be as good as men are doing so at the expense of injuring their feminine nature. I speak here from experience. I feel that it is imperative for devotee women to reclaim their femininity as worthwhile. We must recognise our unique contribution to culture and society as intrinsically valuable. Women are empathetic in relationships, have a strong aesthetic orientation and an altruistic desire to provide care. Surely these are valuable assets for any society.

We're Not This Body Anyway

In my own devotional service I was often the only woman working among men. Those men served as my senior role models. My mentors and spiritual authorities. I wanted to become an advanced devotee like them: to please Srila Prabhupada; be renounced; not attached. It soon became obvious to me that I couldn't be any of those things if I acted like a woman. So when they mocked women who cared what colour *sari* they wore, who wasted Krsna's *laksmi* purchasing earrings and bangles to decorate their bodies, or who had babies instead of book bags, did I tell them how offensive I found their behaviour? Did I say anything in defence of my Godsisters? No. I joked and laughed with them. And for all this I was rewarded. Like a seal who successfully jumped through a hoop, I was applauded.

Shock

Then one day I had a shock. I realised that I was one of those women I so glibly scorned. At the same time, however, I didn't have a clue anymore what that meant. How did one graciously accept the body Krsna awarded me at birth, without feeling disgust for it, without feeling shamed for having desired womanly association in my last life, without feeling hopeless of being able to go back to Godhead with it?

No Such Thing as Love in This Material World

What our Society's continued devaluation of women will lead to over the coming generations remains to be seen. But has it not already contributed considerably to our marriage failures? Are our own problems in reconciling spiritual principles within the context of intimate relationships having adverse effects on our children? Children need love. "Discipline with love," Srila Prabhupada says. "Induce through happy, loving spirit. The teacher must be expert in representing Krsna's loving compassionate nature. Everything should be done on the basis of love."

But love isn't a word many devotees are comfortable using. We don't have the wide range of choice from *prema* to *kama* that exist in Sanskrit. For us the same word covers the feelings we have for God as well as for ice cream. So rather than use the word we use for the transcendental feelings we're attempting to cultivate for Krsna, we've adopted a pejorative term for the feelings one might have for our spouse and children: attachment. And we use that word with the same tone of voice we often use for the word "*mataji*", spitting it off our tongues. Attached is not something we wish to be, attachment is not something we actively cultivate. This dilemma severely handicaps us when we attempt to be emotionally present for our children or spouse. For if "love" is something reserved only for the Supreme Lord, then what do we give our children? What do we give our husband or wife?

Shame on You!

Children don't only need to feel loved, they need to see love modelled between their parents. This is difficult when we overlay renunciation on what are supposed to be affectionate relationships. How many of us know couples where the husband, so wound up by inappropriate renunciation, cannot even touch his wife's hand without wanting her in bed? Such a husband ends up resenting his wife's womanly qualities, and she in turn feels shamed

by her own natural femininity. It's easy for a man to "renounce" family life and its nitty-gritty responsibilities when love is absent. Is this renunciation—or merely a reaction to frustrated senses? I am sure that if there were more gentle behaviour and genuine affection in the way devotee men related with their wives these same men would not need to explode into gross sense gratification. Or explode right out of the marriage. Women need to be able to feel feminine and appreciated within their relationships; a little bit of affection can go a long way toward making them feel this.

Surrender versus Selfishness

A typical trait women possess is that we don't like to disappoint others. As a consequence we often give our assent to situations with little thought about how they will affect our own lives. This may even include agreeing to marry someone we have no feelings for, agreeing not to marry but to continue with book distribution instead, agreeing not to have children, agreeing to have children, or any number of other similar major decisions. Yet, if a woman braves her own feelings of selfishness and dares to ask to have a need met, she is often not only perceived by others as being demanding and needy, but shames herself for being so ungrateful. This, coupled with our cultural background of seeing women—and in particular, a woman's body—as a seductress, the cause of man's "original sin", has led us to many problems. If a woman feels loved—and physical affection is part and parcel of what makes her feel loved—she will usually be happy and content. She will remain chaste to her husband, and the children will be raised in a healthy environment conducive for developing Krsna consciousness. Thus she and her children will feel protected. On the other hand, a woman who receives no affection, and whose husband uses her for sex when he "falls down" will never feel protected or happy. She'll feel used and abused. This may even be genuine violent abuse by a husband who sees her as the external cause of his "falldown." Because he wants to enjoy her, but can't touch her—he must hate her. If it wasn't for her presence he could live a simple spiritual life, not have any sex desire, and even gain some prestige in society for his great capacity for renunciation. Or so he thinks.

Marriage?

I don't believe that any of us have a very clear definition of what marriage in Krsna consciousness actually means.

My conviction is that marriage is an opportunity for everyone, both men and women, to mature emotionally and spiritually. In order for there to be growth in a union, much more must be brought to it than mere domination of the woman by the man. Marriage requires patience, it's a relationship, a contract, a promise to help each other. It's not selfishness, that when the man feels satisfied (or just plain frustrated), he says, "Now I can renounce," not taking into account the other half of the marriage and her needs. Or the children's needs. Our philosophy is all about loving exchanges, and yet in our daily lives we seem to remove those natural exchanges from our primary relationships. Any intimate relationship must be founded on the ability to be completely honest with our partner. But false renunciation of any sort is a form of dishonesty. How can love—whether for Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupada, one's wife and children, or the other devotees—flourish in an atmosphere of pretence? And where is there a chance of arriving at the Absolute Truth through a dishonest process?

Our own scriptures tell us that intimate association with devotees is elevating. But just how many of our husbands actually see their wife's association as elevating? If a man is not perceiving how he is growing spiritually by his wife's association, I would suggest that he is failing to see her as a devotee, but rather an object for his senses. Should we not also be actively propagating marriage as the respectable, responsible, spiritually dynamic, and yes, loving, institution that it really should be? The whole and holy *asrama* that it is purported to be, not the second-rate solution for those too weak to be celibate.

But Not All Ladies Agree with You

I do not claim to speak on behalf of all women within our Society. Surprisingly much of the criticism levelled at me, or at women who are vocal like me, comes from other women. There are several causes for this as far as I can determine. One is that we have successfully, over the last fifteen years at least, taught the newer ladies joining our Movement that being Kṛṣṇa conscious is commensurate with renouncing your self-worth; that intrinsically men and their needs are more important in this spiritual society; that women are more simple than men, and can participate in the Movement, but not to the same degree as men; that certain activities are the exclusive domain of those in male bodies and that this concept is coming from India and

therefore Vedic; that marriage is a step-down from the advancement one was making in *brahmachari/brahmacarini* life; that there is not much benefit to be gained from being married other than to legally extinguish material desires; that in order to warrant being given protection by the men in our Society, a woman is required first to act in a chaste manner; that it is the woman's responsibility to ensure that no man in this Movement feels any tinge of sexual feelings toward her.

And many of these ladies unfortunately have bought that—lock, stock and barrel. So when we now tell them that this isn't what we understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness to be, they rightfully protest that we are "changing things." Perhaps we are. I feel, however, that the present status quo is not what Śrīla Prabhupada intended it to be; that somewhere along the line, either due to our own dysfunctional backgrounds, or our misinterpretation of his instructions, or the inappropriateness of superimposing Vedic culture without adjustments on products of Western civilisation, we have gone askew. Certain women may be unable to see inequities in a male-defined system due to repressing anger. This anger may have come from abuse by a male authority. She may numb herself to forget the humiliating pain associated with the trauma, or block remembrance of it from her conscious memory. That pain merely anaesthetises her to her own instincts and intuition, and when she sees other women expressing anger, it is too close for her. If she releases her own anger, God forbid, she might get "out of control". Thus she just "doesn't see the problems".

Another factor one must take into consideration when hearing women who protest that the issues this article focuses on does not reflect their opinions, is to look at who those women are. I would venture a guess that most of these women have been in a rare, protective relationship for the bulk of their life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are very fortunate. Women like me have had different experiences and have had to learn how to juggle various elements in order to stay on keel emotionally. We have had traumas with which we are trying to reconcile ourselves, such as raising orphaned children on our own, or understanding how Kṛṣṇa allowed the abuse we suffered to go on. Our arguments should not be dismissed just because we are not in the majority. Our Society

should be very happy if that is indeed the fact—that women such as me are the minority.

Lessons Learned

Despite the obviously noxious elements in my own relationships with men, I must admit that I did gain confidence in my own intelligence and abilities through the support of my Godbrothers. I gained a degree of freedom from traditional female roles by discovering a core of self that transcended femaleness. I've understood that we all share a common spiritual goal, defined by our love for devotional service and our interest in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness; and thus we are alike.

I foolishly extrapolated this to mean that I could become like my Godbrothers. I felt flattered to be occasionally told that I thought like a man. At the same time I experienced contempt for women who were satisfied living out traditional women's roles. I felt special, favoured. But I realise that this has led to a betrayal of myself as a female. I had a superior attitude toward other women, I wanted to think like a man; but of course I hated myself as a woman. I closed off large areas of myself in my quest to identify with men. I realise now that in rejecting the feminine I've inhibited my growth as a woman and denied many inherent skills. I've also committed *Vaisnava aparadha* towards many of my sincere Godsisters. I would hope that none of the younger women who are joining us, who perhaps have been lured by the propaganda in the material world that women can and should equal men, will attempt to emulate the path I trod. Neither do I hope that the only other alternative is to trail sheepishly behind the so-called "submissive" women who are silently smouldering within.

In putting forward some of these feelings and concepts, and in pushing for reforms in various places within our Society, many Godsisters and I have become labelled as heavy, unsubmitive or unchaste. But the truth of the matter is that we are more than happy to take the role of women. More than happy to submit to the protection offered to us by our Godbrothers. We welcome it, we beg for it. Please give it to us.

Women should not have to walk around feeling like objects, or that we must protect the men from becoming attracted to us. We're supposed to be the protected ones. The ability to preserve life is a feminine quality. This

makes women ideal instigators for bringing a community together to work for our common good. Women are networkers, desiring to feel affiliated, part of a larger family. Over the ages women have been the ones demanding protection for the young and less fortunate.

So I am actually acting within my feminine role by trying to bring this to your attention. And, if antagonism toward women in our Society is coming from agitation due to our past backgrounds, can we not be honest? Can we not call it that? Can we stop calling it Vedic? What I would like to see is a new hoop for women to aspire to jump through. One that encourages us to become Krsna conscious as we develop those soft qualities of Vaisnavis. We need the strength of our femininity to be rewarded. We need guidance and nurturing as we make our practice jumps, and allowances for our initial failures. Better yet, however attractive they are, do we want any hoops at all? Wouldn't it be preferable to just let all the seals, both male and female, swim freely in the ocean of devotional service that Srila Prabhupada introduced us all to? Let them swim alongside the dolphins and whales; let them bask on the shore alongside the penguins and sea-gulls.

A Fairy Tale?

In our own circles we women can do something to help heal our wounds. But if our Godbrothers support us, with compassion and strength they help us to heal, we may learn how to reclaim our deep feminine spiritual wisdom. This will be a source of great wealth not only for the women, but for the men. For it is not only ourselves who are battle weary, the men must also be suffering as well. Like the fairy tale in which a woman cursed to take a monstrous shape reverted to her original beauty when a courageous knight loved her and allowed her to be herself, our own relationships can change. Up to now you may have only been seeing the grotesque and frightening side of women like me. But if you shower us with compassion, we will freely change for you. You will be able to perceive our beauty and our gifts. And we will be grateful to those gallant knights who have saved us from the wicked spell that this material world has kept us under for so long.

It's important not to merely focus blame on others, but to examine the causes and take responsibility for self-healing. Out of our own sadness hopefully we can develop compassion

for those who have hurt us. I'd like to thank all my Godsisters for their solace and support and beg their forgiveness for my offences. I'd also like to thank the many Godbrothers who have been honest enough and brave enough to lovingly validate and encourage me. And I'd like to forgive those Godbrothers who up to now have been unable to understand our plight.

The original length of this article is considerable. Therefore, I did not publish it in its entirety. Anyone who would like to receive a full manuscript can send \$1.00 and a sk for a copy. Pranada dasi.

What's the Difference?

Datta dasa

Oregon City, Or

For those of us in the *grhastha-asrama*, it is important to make the most of our situation to be able to make steady spiritual advancement.

Grhastha life is neither all spiritual or all material. After all, if we were on the pure transcendental platform, we probably wouldn't be married in the first place. My personal conviction is that a lot of our trouble in advancing spiritually, whether we are *grhasthas* or not, comes from not recognizing our true position.

I submit the following at the risk of sounding mundane. However, I sincerely believe these points are relevant to our advancement in Krsna consciousness.

I would be grateful to hear any criticisms or suggestions anyone may have. The following is a condensation of a longer essay, which I'll send to anyone who requests a copy. Write me at 11476 S Finnegan Way, Oregon City OR 97045

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The lack of recognition of the differences between men and women is the root cause of trouble between the two. If one says that lack of spiritual life is the cause, then how do we explain the fact that so many gross materialists have "good" marriages, while the divorce rate for devotees is higher than for nondevotees?

Men and women differ in many ways. Some of the difference is due to social conditioning, but most of the difference is biological in nature; there are over 180 physical differences alone.

Men and women think differently. Men tend to lean more toward logic and details, while women tend to rely on their emotions. Women's intelligence tends to be more oriented toward relationship and communication, which

can be a major asset not only within the marriage, but with other relationships as well.

Men's intelligence tends to be oriented toward analysis and logic. In fields such as mathematics and engineering, males tend to perform far better than females. Even in school systems where girls are encouraged equally in those subjects, it has been seen that boys are more adept.

As a general rule, men tend to have more discriminatory power in most areas and are therefore better able to guide others. This is by no means absolute: many women have greater discrimination than many men. Men tend to have a deep sense of protection of the opposite sex. Women tend to have a deep desire to be protected.

Women are affected quite differently by emotions than men are. Those emotions also tend to change to a greater degree due to a woman's monthly cycle and all the powerful hormones behind it. The hypothalamus, which has a tremendous effect on our emotions, works completely differently for a man than it does for a woman.

In a recent *New York Times* survey, women were asked whether they would rather be protected by, or respected by, a man. Those answering that feeling protected was more important outnumbered those who listed respect as most important. The big surprise was that nearly a third of the respondents answered that both were most important, even though it was not an option on the questionnaire.

This brings us to the current dilemma. Women have been seriously mistreated. The feminists are right about that. Right now, things are going from bad to worse. In this country, 30 percent of all women who are murdered are killed by their husbands or boyfriends. A woman is beaten by a man every twelve seconds in the United States, four women per day die from such abuse. According to a *New York Times* poll, over 30 percent of women in this country have been sexually abused by the time they reach 18 years of age.

These are signs of a sick, unhealthy society. It is therefore not surprising that the idea of a woman needing the guidance and protection of a man is so completely outrageous to many women in this day and age.

Even within our Society, there has been widespread mistreatment of women. Instead of women devotees being treated with respect, many have been abused and mistreated, directly and indirectly. This is a major prob-

lem—a problem that cannot begin to be solved until we, as a movement, at least admit it exists.

Can a woman who has been abused and mistreated by nearly every man in her life (perhaps even by a devotee husband or authority) be blamed for not wanting to trust anything male?

There aren't easy answers for this problem. The formula depends on the man being qualified, but qualified men are getting scarcer all the time.

Equality between men and women can be understood in two ways. Equality can be taken to mean "the same as," which in the case of men and women is obviously far from the truth or "as good as."

We each have a certain type of body, but that type of body doesn't make us better or worse than others. Although that may sound stupidly simple, we have seen a lot of devotee women receive very poor treatment just because of their sex.

It seems that there is sort of a downward spiral happening. The more unqualified men are to lead a relationship, the more women desire independence, the more things in general get out of balance. The more things get out of balance, the more unqualified men become, and so on. Kali-yuga is knocking at our door.

Consider the following: of all types of violent crime, men commit over 90 percent. What is really surprising is that for most categories of social pathology, between 80 and 90 percent are comprised of single men.

Single men make less money than any other category, including single women and married women. Single men (as compared to all other groups) are seen as a much greater risk by insurance companies, tend to be far less responsible in paying their bills, and in general tend to be more problematic, statistically speaking. Along with the destruction of the family unit, they constitute the leading social problem in the "civilized" world.

Women on the other hand have much more of a tendency to put down roots, to build a nest. Women tend to become degraded without the guidance of a man, and men tend to become degraded in a different sense without the stabilizing influence of a woman. The *varnasrama* system does allow for single men (*brahmacharis* and *sannyasis*), but there are specific rules and regulations that must be followed to prevent disturbance.

As time goes on, we hear more

and more propaganda against the family unit. Women are encouraged to compete with men. Homosexual relationships are advertised as being as good as permanent heterosexual marriages. People, including devotees, divorce as easily as they would trade in a used car.

Women are the real backbone of the family. With women being encouraged to put less and less emphasis on family life, the family as a unit is rapidly becoming weaker.

For the formula of the man giving guidance and protection to the woman to function properly, there must be an absence of desire to exploit. Even when there is an unconscious desire for exploitation, the formula won't work effectively. Therefore, only if the relationship is based on spiritual values (although that in itself is not enough), will things work out to everyone's benefit.

Many times, we have a lot of trash (*anarthas*) from our past that interfere with our progress in developing a particular relationship. That can be especially true in the case of husband and wife. Mutual respect is absolutely essential in working out a common path upon which both partners can make progress.

If the husband thinks that he can do anything or say anything without any feedback from his wife, he is wasting a valuable resource. Because of the difference in the way men and women think and feel, many times the woman's point of view can be invaluable in making a proper decision.

Srila Prabhupada has repeatedly stated that there is no difference between a good wife and good intelligence.

Men and women have complimentary qualities and attributes that can help the relationship develop spiritually, and help both parties make steady spiritual advancement.

The problems created by the onslaught of Kali-yuga are enormous. Just knowing the truth is not enough. It is important for all of us to at least try to do what is right.

The *varnasrama* system, as everything else in the *Vedas*, is based on absolute truth, and therefore makes absolute sense. Many times it helps to understand reasons behind these truths. There is no guarantee that marriage will bring happiness. In fact, we can understand that to the degree that we are on the material platform, we will be unhappy, married or not.

The best thing therefore, is to take

full advantage of the *grhastha-asrama* to make steady spiritual advancement, as opposed to the mentality that we somehow try to make spiritual advancement in spite of being *grhasthas*.

First we Have to Know Ourselves

Nirmala Candra dasa

Port Royal, PA

There are some personal realizations I would like to share with you and your readers. They have to do with our personal relationships because they relate to knowing ourselves.

Krsna is all-knowing and therefore understands our desires. Krsna fulfills all of our desires and only Krsna really knows our hearts. If our desires are to reach a position in others peoples' eyes, He will fulfill those desires. If we fervently pray that Krsna give us the ability to pray to Him, He will give us that. If we fervently pray that Krsna show Himself to us, He will do that. It is a matter of what other things we might also want in addition to what we are praying for. Krsna, as the Supersoul, receives a message from us as spirit souls. That message is either clear or mixed to one degree or another.

We should have the faith and mercy to realize that Krsna loves all his children; He is the best listener; He is the most understanding person; He knows what is best for us; He is in control of everything; He fulfills our desires. All we have to do is pray to Krsna.

The principles and rules are a strategy used to reach as goal. A lot of people forget what the goal is and they think that being able to follow the principles is the goal. They judge everyone according to whether or not they are following the principles or rules. They consider themselves "better devotees" or they think of other people as "fallen" or less of a devotee. They are actually defeating their purpose. They are boosting their self-importance.

Krsna is not limited to liberating someone only because they follow certain rules. Someone can pray, "Krsna, you know my heart, I am unable to follow these rules because I am weak, all I really want is to be free from this self-importance and anxiety that goes along with being in this body. I know you are capable of anything so please show me what I need to know."

I feel that many reasons we have fear and inhibition in our prayers comes from our parents. If we feel bad and guilty all the time we don't notice things we can do to positively affect the lives of our children and the people

around us. We can use the energy Krsna gives us as we like.

Sometimes we can also place too much weight on our shoulders by thinking we will change the world overnight. We need vision to see that Krsna will take care of the future because He is actually in control. We don't have to do anything great, all we need to do is use our energy in giving love and attention to ourselves and the people we affect. When we do that we include everyone in Krsna's family because those people that we come to affect will think favorably and lovingly about you and about Krsna because He will be the one to whom you attribute all of your joy. If we can do this, slowly the world will change to a place where each generation will become more and more attracted to Krsna.

We need to try and become uninhibited in our prayers. This way we can communicate whole heartedly with Krsna. We need not feel guilty and try and hide our face from Krsna. He already knows everything and will embrace us as soon as we embrace Him. He has forgiven us.

It is not for us to judge whether or not somebody deserves our friendship. We should befriend everyone equally. The symptoms of persons who are self-realized are they are not disturbed by happiness or distress, heat or cold, honor or dishonor, and they see everyone with equal vision. I can't do this myself; and I pray and try my best, the rest depends on Krsna.

Unusual Types of Devotees That Krsna Loves Anyway

Dasaratha-suta dasa
Atlanta, GA

- Godbrothers who are humble toward their God sisters
- Hippies from wacky *asramas*
- Women who don't wear *saris*
- Couples who don't have children
- Uninitiated disciples of Srila Prabhupada
- Couples in which one partner is uninitiated
- Talented devotees who haven't given up their skills and/or equipment
- Skilled devotees who can keep up with their tools
- Those who don't relish flaming hot *dal*
- Those who can't comply with all the Vedic injunctions
- Devotees who live and let live
- Those who are still happy in their Christianity, Judaism, etc.
- Naturally uninhibited people
- Devotees with hair
- Devotees without hair who don't

mind people with hair

- Marginally regulated teenagers
- Those who genuinely prefer nectar to televised sports
- Space-cases who can't seem to perform any service
- Blooped/burned-out devotees who want to visit temples again
- Couples who really love each other
- Devotees who see Vrndavana in their lives
- Devotees with a tolerant sense of humor

Submission and Surrender

Dhanesvara dasa
Burnaby, Canada

Before you read much further in this article I want to ask you a question. After you read this question please stop reading, continuing only after you have answered it. The question is simply: What do you like to do? Stop reading now until you've answered the question. You may also want to write your answer down.

I've been polling devotees with this question for over a year now. I've found that most devotees who are living outside the temples can answer the question quickly and personally. They know what they like to do. Devotees who live in temples often answer the question by saying "Whatever is necessary." Upon getting such a response I generally repeat the question with emphasis on *like to do*. The question will then either draw the same response, or a long pause during which the novel concept of doing what one actually likes to do is being examined and considered.

It is interesting that usually the "surrendered" devotees are the ones who answer with "whatever is necessary," and who also have the most difficulty giving an immediate, and straightforward personal answer. This seems like an exemplary attitude—one which enables the activities and functions of the temple to get done efficiently, and in my experience of temple living this attitude is what is taught, or passes for, "surrender." But is it?

Devotees are taught that to do whatever is necessary is surrender to Krsna, and that those who are able to do whatever is necessary are "advanced devotees." To do whatever is necessary is certainly a submissive and cooperative spirit, but sooner or later I believe that a devotee must find a suitable engagement that they *like* doing if they are to be sustained for any period of time in active devotional service.

Our collective experience seems to bear this out. By and large, the devotees who are most steady in their service, and consequently in Krsna consciousness, are those who are able to find a service which suits their nature. Consider for a moment the devotees you know who have been the most steady in Krsna consciousness. Do they not have a service which seems to be ideally suited to their talents, abilities and nature? And by now we probably all know several devotees who, while in the movement, couldn't seem to settle down with one service, but since leaving full-time devotional service have been contentedly engaged for years at some occupation.

My point is that it would seem prudent in the temples to either engage devotees in, or train them in, service that they *like* to do. Srila Prabhupada would often tell devotees: "So whatever you like doing, do that for Krsna."

Surrender which is appropriate and which will sustain the devotee must be surrender to the devotees' own nature. Conversely, trying to surrender to something which is foreign to one's nature can at best bring only temporary results.

Consider the lesson from the *Bhagavad-gita* where Lord Krsna repeatedly asks His devotee and friend, Arjuna, to surrender. First of all, what "kind" of surrender is Krsna asking of Arjuna? He is asking Arjuna to surrender to his own nature. Arjuna's nature is that of a *ksatriya*, and his *maya* is that he wants to act otherwise. He wants to avoid the fight, yet Krsna tells him, that not only should he fight because Krsna wants him to, but that he also should fight because that is his nature. It is important to note that Krsna is not trying to get Arjuna to surrender to washing the dishes, making money, or renunciation, all of which would have been alien to his nature. Krsna in fact tells him that he would be falsely directed to act otherwise: "If you do not act according to My direction and do not fight, then you will be falsely directed. By your nature, you will have to be engaged in warfare." (Bg. 18.61) This is one example. Furthermore, in Srila Prabhupada's *pranam mantra* we acknowledge that he is delivering the Western worlds which are filled with voidism and impersonalism. But what is this voidism? *Nirvisesa*. *Visesa* means qualities. *Nirvisesa* means without qualities.

We all have different qualities, and especially in human life these qualities present themselves in our psyche and

are meant to be manifested in our activities. Just as Arjuna, we will be inclined to act according to these qualities, according to our own nature. However, to do this we must know what that nature is, yet we are often so steeped in impersonalism that we don't!

We are alienated from our very selves. *Nirvisesa*. Therefore, answering a question such as "What do you like to do?" can actually be difficult!

When such self-alienated people become devotees they may naturally want to be good devotees, submissive and cooperative. However, asking such persons to do the needful for an indefinite period of time can only exacerbate an already chronic condition, and such "surrender" will be temporary. Sooner or later the individual will rightfully be agitated to find their true nature and act according to it. Such an individual if pressed to do the needful just one too many times may just move on out the door, and be looked down upon because he/she "blooped." Yet I think that if we fully understand the situation we should consider such an action appropriate, normal and healthy.

What I am suggesting by all of this is that we learn to think a little deeper about those factors which influence our spiritual life: our condition of *nirvisesa* and *sunyavadi*, what it means to be a healthy person, what surrender really means, and to understand that in order to be fully functional, satisfied persons, we all need to be engaged according to our own nature. Let's understand the difference between submission and surrender, and apply both concepts appropriately. With the proper understanding ISKCON authorities can foster healthy personal and spiritual development by engaging us appropriately, so that in due course we may come to surrender our false ego, and follow the direction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Oh! However, you've already answered the question. Now try to find some way to do whatever it is you like to do for Krsna.

Grhastha Weekend Gathering Brajendranandana dasa Badger, Ca

On the first weekend of January, 1993, a Grhastha Retreat was attended by twelve devotee couples at Badger, California high in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains. Devotees came from different locations in California and Oregon, and when the weekend was over everyone agreed that they had

participated in a very inspiring event.

A number of devotees have been meeting regularly in separate men's and women's groups in Santa Cruz and Three Rivers for several years. When some of us moved to Badger over a year ago we connected with several of the resident devotees who were attracted to the idea of developing strong and supportive relationships. We began to meet once a week, the only requirement being a commitment to confidentiality and an agreement—except for emergencies—to show up at each meeting.

The mutual scrutiny and support we've received from one another have been invaluable in helping us to make honest and firm commitments in service to *guru* and Krsna. As we've learned to trust one another more and more, we've developed an increasing sense of being part of an extended family. This has helped us tremendously in dealing effectively with our responsibilities to our spouses and our children. Hoping to share our experiences with others, we initiated and hosted the above-mentioned gathering, which took place at the home of Gopavrndapala Prabhu and Mother Mulaprakrti. The outcome far exceeded anyone's expectations.

One segment of the weekend was devoted to discussing different topics that concern *grhastha* devotees. Everyone was given the opportunity to share their experiences and realizations. Some of the agenda topics were: dismantling the barriers to love and trust among devotees; the differences in male and female psychology; the role of *grhasthas* in the preaching mission; Vedic culture—it's relevance and practical application; the necessity of commitment within marriage; developing extended families and devotee communities; co-operating in a multi-*guru* society; dealing with financial responsibility; etc.

Time was allotted also for the men and women to meet separately and confidentially to discuss matters unique to their respective sexes.

In my opinion, however, the most significant aspect of the weekend was that a mood was generated whereby devotees felt safe to reveal their minds and go beyond the externals of normal social etiquette. The devotees present represented in many ways a microcosm of our larger devotee community. But despite our differences in *gurus*, differences in economic status, differences in temperament, etc., we gave priority to our common commitment to become Krsna conscious and to our

desire to come together as devotees. This enabled us to be respectful and sensitive in the areas where we differed. A genuine spirit of friendship and trust removed the barriers of suspicion and fear that may have initially separated us. There were wonderful *kirtanas* interspersed throughout the weekend, and the *prasada* which was prepared cooperatively by all the devotees was especially relishable.

Shortly after the gathering one devotee, Raghunanda Prabhu, wrote to the rest of us: "Think of Prabhupada's commitment in coming to New York to save us. It was complete. If the reciprocation we promise is to be real we must be committed to saving ourselves and our Godbrothers and Godsisters, and the process of confidentially revealing one's mind and taking help from each other can give this. In many places we find Maya overwhelming our *grhastha* brothers and sisters, and the mission is greatly suffering thereby. But by helping each other through the *sankirtana* of confidential, meaningful *sanga* we can strengthen each other for the ongoing battle with the plunderers." By our working together we can strengthen the *grhastha-asrama* so that it functions as a powerful preaching force in Lord Caitanya's *sankirtana* movement. With love and trust as the basis of our dealings, we'll discover that our personal Krsna consciousness will be nurtured, and that we'll be able to provide our children with an extended devotee family and a cultural legacy to help them withstand the powerful influence of Maya. Simultaneously, we'll be able to present a practical example of societal Krsna consciousness to attract newcomers to join our family of devotees and accompany us in our progressive path back to Goloka Vrndavana.

Subsequent to the gathering, some couples started men's and women's devotee groups in Eugene, Oregon and Los Angeles, California. Weekly meetings are already underway. If any readers want more information they can also contact Gopavrndapala and Mulaprakrti at (209) 337-2545 or Brajendranandana and Gopanandini at (209) 337-2120.

Husbands in the Vedic Age Rohinandanana dasa

Woodgate Cottage Beckley Sussex
I would like to thank Rose Maylie for suggesting that men write something about how "men should treat their wives" and for Mulaprakrti and Visakha Prabhus for agreeing with the

idea.

An implication which can easily be construed from the article in BTG July/August 1992 "Light for the Dark Well," is that the onus is on a woman to make a marriage succeed. The subtitle, "Krsna Conscious Family Life" further insinuates that Sukanya's example is what we as a Society expect, as though it is our idea for a "glorious marriage." As a study of how to make the best of an apparent bad bargain, Sukanya's attitude and behaviour can be an inspiration for anyone, male or female, but as a study of married life in the Vedic times, her marriage is far from typical.

Much more typical is the example of Lord Krsna's married life. As Sukanya was presented by the article as an ideal wife, so in *Krsna The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, Srila Prabhupada presents Lord Krsna as an "ideal householder." Srila Prabhupada says, "We should always remember that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krsna was playing exactly like a human being; although He showed His extraordinary opulences by simultaneously marrying more than 16,000 wives in more than 16,000 palaces. He behaved with them just like an ordinary man, and He strictly followed the relationship between husband and wife in ordinary homes."

Admittedly, when He visited our planet, Lord Krsna in His capacity as God, performed many different *lilas*, or pastimes, which we cannot imitate. But still, in respect to Krsna's dealings as a family man, Srila Prabhupada has this to say, "To become ideal householders we should follow in the footsteps of Lord Krsna as He displayed His daily activities." In the next paragraph Srila Prabhupada gives us a glimpse into Krsna's marital affairs. "Lord Krsna used to lie down with His sixteen thousand wives, but also He would rise up from bed very early in the morning, three hours before sunrise."

In order to reciprocate the love of each of His wives, Lord Krsna expanded himself into as many forms to be exclusively at the side of each wife. This amazing feat was once witnessed by Narada Muni who as privileged to see how all 16,108 Krsnas were simultaneously dealing. In one palace, for example, Lord Krsna and one of His wives sat talking intimately; in another palace the Lord and a dear wife were playing chess; in another He was playing with His children; in another He was performing religious rituals together with His wife; and in another

He was meditating.

To give an idea how seriously the Lord took his duty of a husband and how much he loved His wives and sought their happiness there is the instance of the *parijata* flower which Lord Krsna helped His wife Satyabhama procure despite the opposition of King Indra and other demigods. Another time, presenting Himself as an ordinary householder who delights Himself by exchanging joking words with His wife, Lord Krsna said to Rukmini, "Actually, the householders work very hard day and night, but all fatigue of the day's labour becomes minimised as soon as they meet, husband and wife together, and enjoy life in many ways."

The impression I get from these and other instances involving the marital dealing of Lord Krsna's devotees such as Arjuna and Yudhishthira Maharaja, is that men were as sensitive, respectful and responsive to their wife's physical, emotional and spiritual needs, as their wives were to theirs.

I am aware that this may appear to give a rather one-sided picture stressing the *pravritti-marga*, the path of enjoyment, rather than *nivritti-marga*, the path of renunciation. I do this intentionally to balance the unbalanced picture painted in "Light for the Dark Well." Ultimately, the situation must be judged by what is most favourable for our personal Krsna consciousness and the spreading of Krsna consciousness in general.

Finally I would like to touch on what I perceive contributes to Rose Maylie's "anger and fear." In my opinion it is to do with how we handle ideals; what I should be like and what you should be like. Ideals can be useful by giving us something to aim at, but they can also be destructive if they are used as a tool to either directly or indirectly criticize others. Srila Prabhupada once prevented a hurtful schism by saying: "In Kali-yuga, you cannot strictly follow; neither I can strictly follow. If I criticize you, if you criticize me, then we go far away from our real life of Krsna consciousness." (March 10, 1976)

A Gismo View of Ladies
Hanumantpresaka Swami
Berkeley, Ca

I was working late last night in my library as I am sometimes want to do when Uncle Gismo materialized, coming through the wall as he is sometimes does. Uncle Gismo is

President of the Boston Civil Deadman's Club, Science Editor for my personal periodical, the Hanuman Express Dispatch (HED), and an alien from outerspace coming from someplace in the Andromeda galaxy or something else like that.

He sat down opposite my desk in the large high back chair and stared into the fire for a few moments and then he said, "You know, Hanuman, I've been thinking about this *Priti-laksanam* and the issue of women in ISKCON. I know you've also been reading about it and I thought that I should come and set you straight about a few things before you go ahead and shoot your mouth off and say something stupid that would embarrass us both." He then began to give the following scientific diatribe:

"If you closely examine the discussions between Krsna and Rukmini in Srila Prabhupada's *Krsna* book you can understand what I mean when I say that the "semina" or *ojas* as we call it in Sanskrit circulates in the marrow of the bones. This is a very fine material substance almost mental in character. It may be the source of the idea of ectoplasm that we find in the ghost buster literature on your planet. It circulates in the marrow of the bones and is the substrate upon which everything else is built up. At the time of puberty it begins to flow up the spine in boys and then fertilizes growth of very fine intelligence and internal cerebral structures. In girls, however, it flows downward and outward and thus fertilizes the growth of very fine external features: hair, skin, teeth and so forth. This is why boys are smarter than girls and why they invariably score better on arithmetic tests, and girls have much finer complexions and senses.

"Of course, I should explain what is meant by 'finer intelligence.' It is something like this. A human being can detect a half Hertz change in pitch at 2,000 Hertz but a fish requires a ten cycle per second change in pitch to notice any difference. Thus an adult male can detect subtle changes in meaning that may not be noticed by an adult female, whereas on the other hand more men are color-blind than women."

At this point Uncle Gismo remained silent and stared into the fire for some time. I cleared my throat and thanked him for this enlightening piece of information. Carl Jung once commented that Germans are the kind of people who after inventing a set of

suspenders for socks would expect you to thank them. I long ago learned that this is Uncle Gismo's situation also.

I hope this is of some value to the readers of Priti-laksanam. I've long ago learned to take Uncle Gismo's comments with a grain of salt and usually his column is headed with the Latin phrase *caveat emptor*, buyer beware. But in general I think that this is a little enlightening for us who are trying to understand how to use our bodies better.

If anybody has any questions or comment on any of Uncle Gismo's views or other topics they can write my miserable self at the HED: Box 4261, Berkeley, CA 94704, U.S.A., and I will try to communicate with them through the transparent via media of the Godhead University Reality Underwriter (GURU).

RESPONSES TO ARTICLES IN PREVIOUS ISSUES

In Response To "Same-Sex Pairing" (Volume 4) Anonymous

I think the fundamental point that Rasamanjari misses is that there is no licit sexual relationship for homosexuals in Krsna consciousness. They must either live singly, or get married, and yes they should probably stay in, or go back into, the closet. I don't want this to sound mean or anything, but I think this is where any honest "gay" devotee will have to learn to deal with this aspect of their conditioning. I know what I am talking about. One of the things I gave up to become a devotee was illicit sex, I was "gay." For a long time I was deeply disturbed that there was no way I could have a healthy relationship in a Krsna consciousness context, but I came to some realizations. One was that sense gratification (the basis of every "gay" relationship) is not what human life is supposed to be about. The *grhastha-asrama* (I am now married) is based on *dharma* (relative duty and responsibility) and, with the blessings of the *guru*, goes on within a religious context. Sense gratification is part of that relationship, but only a part. The main motivation behind same sex behavior is lust. Of course this does not jive with modern psychology, but I think most of what modern psychology has to offer devotees is worthless, even detrimental to devotion. After all if I had been happy and well adjusted I might not have ever surrendered to

guru and Krsna.

Throughout Rasamanjari's letter she implies that same sex coupling is normal. I think she has given her attention to modern psychology's *kirtana* for too long. It is a chosen/conditioned behavior. It can be changed. I used to take drugs, eat meat and smoke cigarettes too, but I cannot say that I am a devotee and continue to do these things.

Rasamanjari Prabhu says, "Married life is a kind of concession for sense gratification with the understanding that the ultimate goal is to give up sense gratification and fully surrender unto the Lord. Same-sex coupling gives the gay devotees, whose chances for purification of sex interest in a marriage are about as possible as for heterosexuals, to be to be purified in a homosexual relationships (sic), this opportunity." Do we think that the purification of sex desire comes from indulging? Who ever taught that? Purification comes from having to deal with another selfish mind, kids, work and basically finding out that loving another flawed conditioned soul is never going to be as satisfying as loving Krsna. When a "gay" devotee I know asked Prabhupada what he should do about his problem, Prabhupada told him to find a nice girl and get married. If a "gay" devotee ultimately finds the situation unsatisfying, all the better.

There are many moral stands that devotees take that may seem backward by modern standards (most householders I know sleep in separate rooms, they don't smoke pot or drink liquor, and they don't allow their kids to date or watch TV). And so may the idea of suggesting that "gay" devotees go back in the closet, and feel guilty. But guilt is the Supersoul's way of telling you that you are doing something wrong. We shouldn't try to anesthetize our conscience. I went back into the closet, and I feel so much better. It is still a fight at times, but when I am strong, I know I am pleasing God and *guru*, rather than myself, and that is what Vaisnavism is all about.

In Response To "A Birthday Prayer" (Vol. 5) Let's Realize our Great Fortune Ragamika dasi ISKCON L.A.

I can understand why our Anonymous Godsister feels unwelcome and third-class after 21 years in ISKCON, but it is most regrettable that she considers separating from the Society in order to continue practicing Krsna conscious-

ness to her hearts content.

This marks my 22nd year in ISKCON and I pray that I will always be mindful of the great fortune it is to be serving Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON, which he himself refers to as his body.

Srila Prabhupada has created this ISKCON "ship" (if I may) to transport us back to the spiritual world across this vast and deep ocean of Kali-yuga. The inconveniences and "injustices" we may experience while on board are insignificant compared to what Destiny had in store for us had we not been swept up by Lord Caitanya's transcendental network of mercy. Exemplifying the devotee's commitment to ISKCON, despite its shortcomings, Srila Prabhupada recalled how the British used to proudly say, "England, with all thy faults, I love thee!" So he mimicked, "ISKCON, with all thy faults, I love thee!"

Indeed, the Kali-yuga ocean is filled with faults. So it's not surprising that we came on board still bearing evidence of having been saturated with these faults. Regarding some of the "injustices" practiced in our movement toward women, I feel the appropriate changes won't come about by legislation enacted by our leaders. The Supreme Superintendent in the form of Time, will, in various places and circumstances in this movement, inspire changes that contribute to the overall unfolding of a social milieu that fosters a wholesome relationship between mother and son. Our sons and grandsons and greatgrandsons will hopefully be less and less infected with the extremes of attachment and aversion toward women that cause so many abnormalities and perversions in society. They won't be lacking, however, the healthy sense of caution that prevents the "butter" from melting in the presence of "fire."

In the meantime, we have to put things in perspective, lest we throw out the baby with the dirty bath water. In other words, being distracted by and dwelling on the defects of other members of the crew only magnifies those faults, sometimes so much out of proportion that one foolishly thinks, "Life would be more pleasant if I jump over board."

Let's give up our "port-hole" vision and rise up to the open deck where we can fix our gaze on our most trustworthy Captain, Srila Prabhupada, and join in on the *kirtana* that he's always leading, while directing us back to the shores of Vaikuntha, where we'll be free at last from the anxieties and

influence of this age of quarrel.

In Response to
"Ecstatic Women, Stand Back!" (Vol. 5)
"Everyone in Ecstasy"
Urmila devi dasi
North Carolina

Kundali Prabhu's memory is the same as mine. After the 1975 Mayapur festival, Bhavananda and Gargamuni came to Henry Street, which was famous for *kirtana*. They announced three things: no more women chanting *japa* in the temple room, women should stand in the back during *kirtana*, and no woman should offer *arati* to the Deities at a time when men were likely to be present in the temple room. There was a women's meeting at which time we were told to accept these or not be part of the temple.

I appreciate Kundali Prabhu's observations about Indian women dancing in the temple room. Perhaps it is associated with their culture, described by Srila Prabhupada. He tells us that higher-class women traditionally do not act, dance, or sing on stage in public, particularly before *sannyasis* and *brahmacaris*. In fact, Prabhupada preferred, particularly in India, that we have all-male casts for our plays, although I personally saw him greatly appreciate a Krsna conscious drama with male and female actors (in New York).

I believe we should distinguish stage dancing from ecstatic dancing in the *kirtana*. Whether or not some of the Indian population makes this distinction, Prabhupada certainly does. The following quotes will be helpful in this regard.

(Prabhupada's lecture General 1968 680611LE.MON [Folio listing]) "Just a moment before, we were dancing and chanting equally, the boys, the girls, the men, the women. So there is no distinction. Even if we do not understand the language, what is the meaning of Hare Krsna, but because it is transcendental, because it is spiritual, from the spiritual platform, everything is equal. We forget that we are American, or we are Indian, we are child, we are youth, or man, or woman because in the spiritual platform there is no such bodily distinction."

(Prabhupada's Lectures General - 1972 720416LE.AUC) "Now, here is a girl, my disciple. His [her] original name was Janne. Now he [she] is devotee. And she was dancing in a different way. Now she is dancing Krsna conscious. She was a very reputed artist, you know, in Australia.

Now she has given that [up]. She was earning hundreds and thousands of dollars, but she has given up everything. Now she is Jagattarani: she is delivering the world by dancing with Krsna consciousness."

(Prabhupada's Lectures General 1975 750711A2.PHI) "We are trying to solve all problems by this one stroke, Krsna consciousness. Practically, you can see. Here, while you are chanting, dancing, the boy is dancing, the father is dancing, the black is dancing, the white is dancing, the young is dancing, the old is dancing. You can see practically. The woman is dancing. A man is dancing. So dancing everyone . . . It is realized, but even if you say that they are not realized, but they are feeling ecstasy, that 'We are all servant of Krsna.' . . . Otherwise, if they are not happy, how the man, woman, the boy, the child, the father, the mother, the black and white, everyone is dancing. Why? This is the platform of happiness. So we are inviting, 'Come to this platform.' "

(Interview Toronto, June 18, 1976, 760618IV.TOR) Woman: The women could become *panditas*, then. Prabhupada: Oh, yes. *Te 'pi yanti param gatim*. Not only come, she can also attain perfection. There is no such restriction. Krsna said. Woman: Do you have any *panditas* in the Western movement? Prabhupada: There are so many Western woman, girls, in our society. They are chanting, dancing, taking to Krsna consciousness. Of course, because superficially, bodily, there is some distinction, so we keep women separately from men, that's all. Otherwise, the rights are the same. Prof. O'Connell: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a *guru* in the line of disciplic succession? Prabhupada: Yes. Jahnava devi was—Nityananda's wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become *guru*? But, not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become *guru*. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection. . . . *Yei krsna-tattva-vetta sei guru haya*. The qualification of *guru* is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Krsna. Then he or she can become *guru*.

(Letter to: ***** : 69-02-18 Los Angeles) "When our nice boys and girls are dancing together in chanting Hare Krsna at least for that time they forget all about the sex impulse. This is perfection of life, to be so much attracted to Krsna that all insignificant pleasures are utterly forgotten."

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In Response to
"Ecstatic Women, Stand Back!" (Vol. 5)
Teresa
Oregon

Kundali Prabhu's piece in the last issue had such a sweet tone—sober with a little wry humor and impressively honest—it might seem churlish to voice any objections. I had heard before that Prabhupada wanted a side/side arrangement for the *kirtanas*, and it was nice that Kundali pointed out that Indian women do not have a cowering, cringing mood or behavior. He intimates that women in front are fine as long as their behavior is "demure." He notes that when the *kirtana* gets hot, the Indian women move away from the front. His main point is that women in "uncontrollable ecstasy" should not ever dance in front of men. Since my impression is that women devotees hardly dance at all in the temples, never mind in any unrestrained manner, one wonders why Kundali found it necessary to make this point. Also, the Indian women who move away from the front are not moving away to dance wildly in the back, but merely out of normal, intelligent inclination to make more space available for those who dance freely, including jumping and turning, etc.

Dancing in the presence of the Lord is an inconceivably transcendental spiritual practice and one of the three main elements of Sri Caitanya's spiritual path. Women in all human cultures have been the dancers *par excellence*—they are of course suited to develop strength in the legs and grace in the arms. Yet women devotees in ISKCON temples are way too inhibited to dance at all. In fact, they are often so tense and inhibited they don't even sing. Given this sad state of affairs, it seems misguided to keep articulating thought patterns that will reinforce women's fear and tension and sense that they don't really belong in the temple.

Women should be encouraged to dance, not discouraged, as long as they are modestly dressed. Since ecstasy is contagious, it is always positive and beneficial.

Regarding this issue, one of the most senior and respected devotees wrote me that the proper, mature attitude of devotees is "Let's do things in the way that best facilitates the whole situation—both for men and women." The growing mood of the devotees is to cultivate a family feeling and to really

want the best for one's sisters and brothers. Ergo, since dancing in front of the Deities powerfully transforms the being, women should be encouraged!

Kundali says women should be "demure." The dictionary defines this as "affectedly modest and reserved." Since "affected" means consciously mannered if not slightly phony and false, I would like someone to explain why women should take on this burden, which seems inimical to personal integrity.

Since obviously any notion that women should be restricted in their behavior and location in special ways for the convenience of men implies an innuendo that only men truly belong in the temple room—they have dominance and ownership.

I feel this attitude is dubious and problematic. In the second issue of *Priti-laksanam*, Manasa-ganga dasi made some excellent points about *japa*. Her essay is worth re-reading. She brilliantly, conclusively and inoffensively showed that policies and attitudes that aggrandize men's false lordship and ownership of the temple room must just bind them to illusion and are spiritually harmful. Clearly a lot of women have resented being forced to remain in the back of the room—probably because it is a powerful physical symbol of second-class citizenship.

It seems logical that if the men are sincere devotees truly concerned with the nectar of spiritual surrender and advancement, they will not be very interested in the juvenile rewards or pleasures of lording it over women and making them feel they don't belong.

Is there any justification and validity for forcing women to be restricted and completely subordinate? In discussing the question of women giving class, one temple president wrote: "there is no consensus at present in ISKCON with regard to the women's issue." Opinions are divided. As a new devotee considering what kind of commitment and participation are appropriate for myself, I want to understand this. My present impression is that stressing female inferiority and male supremacy are not at all essential to the pure philosophy or the practice of Krsna consciousness. Yet I have a vivid memory of being attacked and mocked by devotees several times for not accepting "Prabhupada's ideas on women."

In genuine innocence and ignorance I ask for someone to explain the value/legitimacy of male supremacy in the war against *maya*. Certainly, if there

were real protection for women in ISKCON, female subordination and acceptance of male dominance/authority would be more appropriate. My impression is that there has been incredibly little concern for the well-being of women in ISKCON: "protection" is a myth and fraud from what I've seen.

I'm keenly interested to find out why women should accept male hegemony when there is no protection. I'd also be grateful if someone would lay out what are "Prabhupada's ideas on women" that have to be accepted in order to be a successful devotee.

In Response to
"Ecstatic Women, Stand Back!" (Vol. 5)
Syama-kunda dasi
London, England

I would like to thank Kundali Prabhu for his honest article. I agree with him that it wouldn't be appropriate for ladies to start kicking their legs in the air (like some of the men) in front of the Deities. However we have to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate dancing in *kirtana* for the pleasure of the Lord.

Srila Prabhupada taught us to jump up and down, moving back and forth, lifting the arms in the air.

What always makes me dance in *kirtana* is standing in front of the most enchanting forms of Sri Sri Radha and Krsna, singing of Their mercy and pastimes. This fills me with so much joy and gratitude that I can't help but lift my arms in the air to glorify Them or beg for Their mercy. As my heart jumps, so my limbs follow.

Why should ladies only be allowed *darsana* of the Deities if they keep relatively still? How would that be possible?

Kundali Prabhu states: "In Vrndavana I see Indian women shoulder their way through the hords of men to stand in the front and take *darsana* of the Deities. Somehow, to me it seems fine. . . In fact sometimes I want to make the way for them, for I find their eagerness to see the Lord and His pure devotee inspiring." Then he says: "They never start to boogie down in ecstatic trance of devotion in front of the men."

I find this phrase very disrespectful and very discouraging as it denigrates a wonderful, spiritual activity which comes from the spiritual world.

Occasionally perhaps there may be a new *bhaktin*, ignorant of proper Vaisnava behavior, who will "boogie down" as if in a discoteque. However it

usually isn't long before she is shown how Vaisnavas dance for Krsna.

The same may occur with new *bhaktas* showing off in front of the ladies. Knowing them to be newcomers with much yet to learn, no one takes it seriously. Just as older men shouldn't be judged or punished because of new *bhaktas* showing off, mature Krsna conscious ladies shouldn't be punished for the temporary and occasional inappropriate behavior of new *bhaktins*.

It is a fact that Indian ladies most generally don't join in the ISKCON *kirtanas*, but neither do Indian men. Indian ladies would never even dream of approaching men in the street to sell them a book. But Srila Prabhupada's female disciples do. He requested it, though that would be wrong according to mundane Eastern moral principles.

Dancing is part of Lord Caitanya's transcendental *sankirtana* movement. One evening after the *Damodarastaka* at Karttika this year in Vrndavana, the sweet melodious *kirtana* went on for quite a while. Not many ISKCON devotees remained and I was surrounded by many Brijbasis and other pilgrims (ladies) in front of Sri Sri Radha Syamasundara's altar. With folded hands I was absorbed in prayer when the *kirtana* eventually increased in intensity. Upon hearing the names of "Radhe, Radhe" I was overwhelmed with happiness and started to jump up and down with my arms in the air. A few older Indian ladies next to me were also very happy and experiencing something.

Smiling, they were looking at me with appreciation and clapping their hands towards me as if to encourage me. Desiring to increase the reciprocity, I spontaneously grabbed hold of the hands of the Mataji nearest to me. To my great surprise and joy, despite her weight and age, she started to jump and spin me around. She was not the only one, many joined in the dancing. Old and young, fat and thin, rich and poor, there were about twenty of us dancing and chanting "Radhe, Radhe," and many more were standing around watching while clapping and chanting.

Here at Bhaktivedanta Manor, we have a large Indian community visiting the temple. Many of them come for the morning program on Sunday. The Indian ladies who come regularly and practice Krsna consciousness are also as eager to dance enthusiastically in *kirtana* as they are to see the Lord and his pure devotee. I don't see why anyone should find this disturbing.

At Bhaktivedanta Manor, men and women stand side by side during the whole morning program and I usually don't see the men for the simple reason that I don't turn my head around to see them; my attention is on their Lordships. It's a question of choice!

When the kirtana really gets going, the men naturally spread out and the ladies naturally move to the back, but this is more due to the lack of space in our particular temple room than anything else. This permits both parties to dance freely, without getting in each other's way. Another reason is that ladies are generally shy and if they also have some enthusiastic energy to release in kirtana, (the temple being too narrow), in order to feel uninhibited, they prefer to move away from the men, there is no need for legislation!

But in big temples such as Vrindavana and Mayapur, where the altars are very wide, both parties can dance side by side in front of the Deities with a good distance apart without having to look at each other.

Kundali Prabhu suggests that "a couple of women with suitable builds" move offenders to the back. I hope he doesn't really mean it, but anyway, my experience is that any lady trained in Krsna consciousness will not need sarcastic signs to keep them in line, what to speak of requiring someone to threaten them with physical force!

We could trust and respect each other a bit more. We all have the same aim to become free from the bodily concept of life and help Srila Prabhupada in reclaiming all conditioned souls to Lord Caitanya's dancing lotus feet.

In Response to "ISKCON's Teenage Dilemma" Volume 4

Pancavati dasi/Malmo, Sweden
We must remember that teenagers are individuals, and even at the time of Sokrates "they never have been so bad."

It's a bad example for our children to depend on other devotees collecting money to support the family because it creates artificial living standards. Book distribution is recommended, but our experience is that very few can make enough income. The chances of getting a higher paying increases with a better education. But ISKCON isn't large enough to provide full education for everyone. Neither are all devotees teachers. Also Urmila Prabhu, and others, cannot expand themselves to educate ISKCON's youth all over the

world.

Since we don't have any *gurukula* close and I'm unable to home school, our 14 year old son attends public school. He keeps his *sikha* and preaches against meat-eating. He takes lunch at home, but he's not chanting. It might not be so bad for devotees to grow up outside of our Society. Then they see what's going on and if they can develop proper knowledge and intelligence they will choose Krsna. For many the forbidden fruit is more interesting.

I don't think teenagers should live in an *asrama* unless it's organized properly. Our son attended Mayapur *gurukula* for one and a half years and experienced child abuse, careless authorities, and breaking of principles.

The young adults need love and attention as much as small children and they need their parents as advisors and supporters. It is very difficult for them to decide their future without grown-ups. It gives security to have the same parents since *asrama* teachers often change. And after some years of rebellion it is most often their own parents they come back to. A Krsna conscious life-style in a strong family structure is very important, to be able to learn in a responsible way how to function with others.

Association between boys and girls? Since we are a small *yatra* of six families spread out in the city I am interested in keeping my 2 small children (5 and 1.5 years) with devotee children as much as possible. It might be possible on a large Vaisnava farm community to separate boys and girls at a later age, but what choice do we have in our situation? To completely separate boys and girls with an attitude of forbidding and controlling is always a failure. It is good if "the extended family" gives an extra hand. The parents gets themselves confused, and the teens thinks them to be "too much."

Recreation and entertainment:
When Srila Prabhupada forbade frivolous sports was it only for grown-ups or was it for all? I allow my teens to listen to *karmi* music and to watch TV. They will like it until they get a good taste for Krsna.

I think I can afford my teens to be "in maya" under my supervision; otherwise, it will be unbearable for them and they will go against everything. They need to learn from real life. Very few people learn only from hearing. I think that most of us parents can say that what our ISKCON teenagers are doing is very innocent compared to what we have done ourselves. We

should be proud of them.

I know I have a lot of contradictions in my writing, but being part of the second generation, 99% *varna-sankara*, is not easy. We are leaving our old "culture" and all that goes with it completely, sometimes it's like a vacuum. But by the force of Srila Prabhupada and other ISKCON *gurus* we are diving into this wonderful world of Krsna consciousness.

In response to *sadhana-bhakti*: I had lived in a temple for nine years and I miss going to the full morning program. I no longer live across the street from the temple and we are too poor to have a car.

I don't feel bad only going to the Sunday Feast and associating with my devotee friends. I know that it is a matter of time—and not counseling—that will change my situation. I'm hoping to return from this *grhastha* marathon soon!

NECTAR SECTION

The Life of Srimati Jahnava Devi
compiled by Dasaratha-suta dasa
Known amongst the Gaudiya Vaisnavas as Ma Jahnava (or Jahnava Ma), and also as Isvari, this great *acarya* of the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya *sampradaya* was famous for her unalloyed devotion to her husband, Sri Nityananda Prabhu. Sri Jahnava and her younger sister Vasudha, both Nityananda's wives, were born as the daughters of Sarakhel Surya dasa Pandita of Shaligram. Sri Jahnava later became a prominent *guru* after the disappearance of Sri Nityananda, initiating both men and women alike.

Nityananda Prabhu, the incarnation of Lord Balarama, is the plenary expansion and intimate associate of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and is none other than Sri Krsna Himself.

It is stated by Srila Kavi Karnapura in the Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika (65) that Vasudha and Jahnava are incarnations of Varuni and Revati, the two wives of Lord Balarama, and that their father Surya Dasa is an incarnation of Revati's father Kakudmi. But in the next verse (66), Sri Karnapura adds that some devotees consider Vasudha to be Ananga Manjari, who is Sri Radha's little sister, whereas others consider Jahnava to be Ananga Manjari. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura concludes many of his songs found in *Kalyana-kalpa-taru* with prayers directed to Sri Jahnava as an incarnation of Sri Ananga

Manjari.

When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu accepted the renounced order of *sannyasa*, Sri Nityananda accompanied Him on His trip to Jagannatha Puri. After sporting many pastimes there, Mahaprabhu ordered Nityananda to return to Bengal and preach. He spoke with Nityananda in a solitary place, and it is said that at that time He also told Him to get married. Thus Nityananda returned to Bengal and had many pastimes as He traveled around like a wandering madman. During this period, He visited the town of Panihati and presided over the chipped rice and yogurt festival of Raghunatha dasa, which is described in the *Caitanya-caritamrta*.

Once while visiting the devotees in Navadvipa, they ascertained (by His desire) that He wanted to get married. Therefore the devotees endeavored to match him with the two daughters of Sarakhel Surya dasa Pandita, who lived in the nearby village of Shaligram. Thus Sri Jahnava and her younger sister Sri Vasudha were wedded to Sri Nityananda Prabhu with great pomp and celebration. The entire Vaisnava community participated, and everyone was overcome with ecstasy because the two wives were both gorgeous beyond compare and extremely pious. They were already known as great Vaisnavis. Later Vasudha gave birth to two children a boy named Virabhadra (or Viracandra), and a girl named Ganga Devi. Kavi Karnapura states (Ggd 67, 69) that Viracandra is an incarnation of Ksirodakasayi Visnu, and Ganga Devi is none other than the river Ganga herself.

The young Vasudha soon passed away, however, and Jahnava thus resolved to raise her sister's children. In addition, she adopted a boy named Ramacandra. In this way, Ma Jahnava spent much of her youth taking care of the three children, making sure they became good devotees. Virabhadra, especially, grew up to be a prominent leader in the Vaisnava community. When he later accepted Jahnava Devi (his stepmother/aunt) as his guru, many other Vaisnavas did so as well.

Much of Jahnava's fame began as a result of her transcendental relationship with Lord Nityananda Prabhu. But her later activities revealed her true greatness, and she was recognized and respected as a superlative Vaisnavi on her own merit. She traveled with large entourages on pilgrimage all around Bengal, and also twice to Sri Vrndavana. While in Vrndavana, she

established lasting bonds with the famous Gosvamis living there, headed by Sri Jiva, Sri Gopala Bhatta, Sri Raghunatha dasa, Sri Lokanatha and Sri Bhugarbha. She cultivated her widely-acclaimed devotion to the Deity Sri Gopinatha and after her return to Bengal she had a Deity of Sri Radhika fashioned and sent to live by the side of Sri Gopinatha in Vrndavana. Indeed, her devotion to this Deity was so intense that it endeared her to the pious and impious alike. By her example she showed how to perform Deity worship and devote one's life to spiritual service.

From time to time there was the observance of huge Vaisnava festivals, such as the one sponsored by Sri Narottama dasa Thakura on the occasion of the first Gaura-purnima celebration. Sri Jahnava Isvari was given a grand reception by Narottama and his associates, and she was honored as the senior Vaisnavi of the event. After the ecstatic *kirtana* led by Narottama, Jahnava ordered everyone to sport the *Holi lila* by throwing brightly colored powders on each other. She was given the first pot of powder and personally put some on the body of the Lord's Deity as an offering. Later, after the all-night *kirtana* and bathing ceremony of Sri Mahaprabhu was concluded, Jahnava cooked and organized the morning offering. Then she fed the assembled devotees with her own hand.

After this great festival, Sri Isvari then bade farewell and proceeded with her entourage on another pilgrimage to Vraja. There she happily met again with all the Gosvamis of Vrndavana, and she was very pleased to listen as Sri Jiva recited many of the newly-written scriptures. Circumambulating the twelve forests along with many devotees, she served the principal Deities in Vrndavana, and then returned to Bengal. Although based in Kharadoha, she still frequently traveled around Bengal to visit the many devotees living in various holy places.

Thus Ma Jahnava Isvari lived a very long and productive life. It is said that she passed away in Kamyavana in Vraja, although no known *samadhī* exists there as a memorial. She delivered many sinful and pious souls with her gift of ecstatic *prema-bhakti*; initiating both men and women into the divine grace of pure devotional service; presiding over great festivals; preaching the glories of chanting the holy names of the Lord; and otherwise spreading the joy of the spiritual world wherever

she went.

Madhurya Kadambini

A Godsister in Vrndavana felt that the readers of *Priti-laksanam* would benefit by hearing and studying *Madhurya Kadambini*. She pointed out that answers to questions *Priti-laksanam* has raised are given there. I appreciate her vision; therefore, I've decided to print excerpts of the *Madhurya Kadambini* in each issue. You'll notice the new column will run in sequence from issue to issue. We hope you enjoy the addition.

Madhurya Kadambini

by Visvannatha Cakravarti Thakura
Chapter One

The mercy of Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu, exquisite sweetness personified, is an uncontrolled bank of clouds. By His auspicious approach He brings life to the grains of devotional service newly planted in the field of the heart and by its auspicious approach. He extinguishes the intense summer heat of lust, bestowing rapture to the universal river of living beings.

From far off, may those clouds of the Lord's mercy give satisfaction and pleasure to this worthless soul, a dried-up tree in the desert.

Though previously others have taken up the path of *bhakti*, I pay my continual obeisances to Srila Rupa Gosvami, the dearmost servant of the Lord, by whose mercy the intelligence to see *bhakti* manifesting its complete *rasas* is attained.

The *Taittiriya Upanisad* after discussing the different coverings (*anna maya*, etc.) says, "*brahma puccham pratistha*" (Brahman, acting as the shelter or support for everyone, is supreme.) This statement establishes that Brahman, acting as the shelter of everyone is superior to the *anandamaya purusa*. But then the same scripture says, "*raso vai sah rasam hy evayam labdhvanandi bhavati*" (The Lord is *rasa* itself. Attaining that *rasa* the *jiva* becomes blissful.) This statement shows that the Lord in His form as *rasa* is supreme.

In this vein, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the cream of *Vedanta* and emperor amongst all types of evidence, describes the Lord as the embodiment of *rasa* or pleasure.

Mallanam asinir nram naravarah strinam smaro murtiman. For the wrestlers Krsna appeared as a thunder-bolt. For the ordinary men He appeared

Therefore the Absolute Truth, that blissful, transcendental Supreme Person, is none other than Sri Kṛṣṇa the son of the King of Vraja. He has an unlimited body, equipped with transcendental *suddha sattva* names, forms, qualities, and pastimes. This blissful Lord descends to the human perception of the ear, eye, mind, and intellect—not by any material cause—but simply by His own independent will. Just as by His own will He appeared in the material world as Kṛṣṇa in the Yadu dynasty and Rama in the Raghu dynasty.

Similarly, as the Lord is not dependent on many material cause for His appearance, so His nondifferent energy, devotional service (*bhakti*), in keeping with its self-manifesting nature, is not dependent on any material cause.

Thus, in the First Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* it is said, *sa vai pumso paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhoksaje, ahaituky apratihata yayatma suprasidati*: The supreme *dharma* for mankind is that which produces causeless and uninterrupted devotion to Viṣṇu, and which completely satisfies the soul.

To be continued.

Notable Quote

Srila Prabhupada

To get real freedom from conditioned life, you have to work for it. Freedom does not come automatically. Suppose you are diseased—you are suffering from fever or some other painful condition. So, to get free of the disease you have to undergo some austerity. If you are suffering from a painful boil on your body, you have to undergo a surgical operation if you want to be cured.

Therefore *tapasya*, some painful auserity, is necessary to get free of the diseased condition of material life. Formerly, the saintly persons or sages would practice many kinds of *tapasya*. In the scorching heat of summer they would ignite fires all around and then sit down in meditation. Or they would go to the Himalaya Mountains, and in the pinching, chilly cold they would stay under water up to their necks and meditate.

So, for God realization people formerly used to undergo such severe types of austerities, but at the present moment we are so fallen that we cannot tolerate even these four principles: No illicit sex, no intoxication, no meat-eating, and no gambling. These are the items of *tapasya* for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Are they very difficult? No. Is it more difficult to give up illicit sex and meat-eating and intoxication than to stay in water up to the neck in chilly, pinching cold?

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