

# Priti-laksanam

A Forum for Vaisnava Discussion

"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

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In the service of  
His Divine Grace

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A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

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## Notes from the Editor

*Priti-laksanam* is a subscription-only newsletter starting with this issue. Unfortunately we had to drop many people from the mailing list. If you would like to subscribe send your name, address, city, state, zip, country and phone number to Priti's address at the bottom of page 1. One year (4 issues) subscription rates are US\$6.00 for USA; US\$7.00 for Canada; US\$9.00 for all other countries.

Submission deadline for the next issue is December 15. Please send your article on disk (tell me what program it is saved in) and note if you would like me to return the disk to you. I will be out of the country during October and November. All letters and subscription requests will be processed the first week of December.

There are 11 back issues available for \$1.00 each.

I can only take Ads and Personals with a prepayment from now on. The cost is \$1.00 per ad, per issue, or \$4.00 per year. If your ad or personal

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—Pdd

## NECTAR SECTION

*Madhurya-kadambini*

Sixth Shower of Nectar

Enchantment of the Heart

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura

When the taste for doing *bhajana* reaches extreme depth and Krsna becomes the very object of one's devotional service, one attains to *asakti* or attachment. At the stage of *asakti*, the desire creeper of *bhakti* bears clusters of buds heralding the swift appearance of the flowers of *bhava* and then fruits of *prema*. The difference between *ruci* and *asakti* is that *ruci* mainly has *bhajana*, devotional practice, as its subject, while *asakti* mainly has the Lord, the object of *bhajana*, as its subject. Actually, *ruci* and *asakti* have both as their subjects, but they differ in that *ruci* is the immature stage of attachment, while *asakti* is the mature stage. *Asakti* polishes the mirror of the heart to such a state the reflection of the Lord suddenly seems to be visible there.

"Oh! My mind is being carried away by material desires, let me fix it on the Lord!" Prior to *asakti*, on realizing his mind has been overpowered by material objects and desires, the devotee by his deliberate effort almost withdraws his mind from them and tries to fix it on the Lord's form, qualities, and so on. At the appearance of *asakti*, however, absorption of the mind in the Lord is automatic, without effort. Even at the stage of *nistha*, a devotee is unable to detect how and when his mind withdraws from topics of the Lord's form, qualities, and so on and fixes itself on material affairs. On the contrary, at the stage of *asakti* one doesn't know how and when his mind withdraws from material topics and spontaneously absorbs itself in topics of the Lord. One below the level of *asakti* can never

experience this. Only a devotee on this level can know what is *asakti*.

Early in the morning, seeing another devotee, he'll begin talking. "Where are you coming from? You have, perhaps, a *salagrama-sila* in the lovely case hanging from your neck? Chanting softly, your tongue is quivering every moment by tasting the nectar of Krsna's name. I don't know why you're giving your *darsana* to an unfortunate person like me and making me joyful. Tell me about all the holy places you've visited. Describe all the saintly souls you've met and what realizations they've blessed you with. You're perfecting yourself and others also." In this way he'll pass some time drinking nectar in intimate talks.

Elsewhere, seeing another devotee, he'll say, "The enchanting scripture under your arm is making you appear very elegant, thus I can guess you're very learned and realized. Kindly recite one verse of the Tenth Canto for me and bring life to the *cataka* birds of my ears awaiting the nectar raindrops of its meaning." Hearing the devotee's explanations, his hair stands on end in ecstasy.

Going elsewhere, seeing an assembly of devotees, he'll say, "Oh, today my life will be successful, for the association of devotees will destroy my sins." Thinking in this way, he pays obeisances to them falling like a stick on the ground. Being welcomed with affection by the most erudite *maha-bhagavata*, the crown jewel of all devotees, he sits before him in crouched posture. He humbly begs from him with tears in his eyes, "Oh, master, you are the crest jewel of physicians able to eradicate the grave material disease that afflicts all living entities within the three worlds. I'm the most fallen and depraved person. Please take my pulse, diagnose my malady, and advise me what medicine and diet to take. By that miracle drug, give me my desires nourishment." Overjoyed with the merciful glance of that *maha-bhagavata* and his trickling nectar of sweet words, he remains a few days to serve that devotee's lotus feet.

At times wandering in the forest, full of love, he'll intuitively interpret the natural movements of the animals and birds as signs

of Krsna's favor or disfavor with him. "If Krsna is showing His mercy to me, then the deer in the distance will come toward me three or four steps. If He isn't, then she'll turn and run away." On the outskirts of a village, seeing a small *brahmana* boy playing who reminds him of the child-saint, Sanaka, he'll enquire from him, "Will I see Vrajendra-kumara?" "No." Hearing that simple syllable, he'll deliberate on whether to take the answer on face value or seek a deeper meaning.

At times he'll remain in his house like a very wealthy but miserly merchant greedy for treasure. "Where shall I go? What should I do? How'll I get my hands on my desired object?" With a worn face he'll be lost all day in thought like this while dreaming, standing, or sitting. When asked by his relatives what's the matter, he'll sometimes act like a mute, and at other times, feigning normality, he hides his inner feelings. His friends will apologize, "Recently he's become scatter-brained." His neighbors will conclude he's an idiot by birth. The followers of *mimamsa* (the philosophy of Jaimini) will think him a fool. Those who study Vedanta will consider him illusioned. The practitioners of pious activities will say he's misguided. The devotees will say he's attained the essential truth. The offenders will say he's a pretender. But that devotee, oblivious to honor and dishonor, having fallen into the current of the great celestial river of attachment to Lord (*asakti*), simply continues in the same manner.

## LETTERS

### Love Your Newsletter

Paramahansa Krsna Swami  
New Vrindavan

Love your newsletter. Maybe we'll get around to sending something in sometime. Enlivening to hear the broader range of views being expressed and it encourages us to know there are like-minded souls in the "greater ISKCON." Thank you for making the forum available.

### Poetry in Priti-laksanam

Vegavati dasi  
Gita-nagari

I've just received the new *Priti-laksanam* and

was surprised to see a poem by Kundali dasa. Surprised because when I submitted a poem to *Priti-laksanam* in January you returned it with a very kind note saying you had decided from the beginning not to include poetry of any sort in the publication because you simply didn't know what was good poetry.

On reading Kundali Prabhu's poem, I believe you. But why did you change your policy?

No poetry will be accepted.—Pdd

### Women in Power: Think Twice

Mahalaksmi dasi

Badger, CA

I am not against women having positions—in ISKCON or elsewhere. But in the realm of devotional existence, I hope whoever takes a position of power and influence over other people's lives is qualified. Because otherwise people get hurt. They (innocent people) get dealt with harshly. Are women more qualified to take on the responsibility? Perhaps there are a few. But I challenge any woman who read the title to this letter and felt her guard go up. I say that if you aspire for power, if you feel the hankering to show you're better than men, then you lack the maturity to hold the post of leadership. Of course, there is the possibility of becoming purified enough while in the position to keep going. But when we offend our Godbrothers/Godsisters, we lose the strength to go on swimming. So be very careful, ladies. And always turn for guidance to someone you trust, man or woman.

### No One to Blame But Ourselves

Bhakta Dasa

Bangkok, Thailand

So nice to see that quite a number of my old brothers and sisters who I have not seen for 20 or more years are participating in this forum.

What's wonderful is to see that although we've all been tested, burned in the fire, we've retained our faith in *guru*, Krsna and *sastra*, and at least from what I hear, our eagerness to preach is again at least smoking if not blazing!

So much talk about relationships in the journal, emotional needs, women's issues, etc. Personally I have found that all these issues do

become resolved by simply living in accordance with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is actually very simple if we give up the desire for sense gratification. That's a big if, and much easier said than done!

How many years I have struggled with the genital, belly, and tongue, or is it reverse? How many times on account of these I have violated my vows? I cannot count them. All I know is that I can blame only myself for my position. I received perfect direction from the perfect source, but of my own volition I chose to ignore such guidance and attempted to enjoy material nature. Who can I blame except myself?

Many years ago, I happened to receive issue No. 27 of the BTG. There was an article written by Gaurasundara Prabhu called "Dullard and Slugs." His opening statement was something to the effect that anyone who did not accept responsibility for his own position was a coward. It was a powerful article and was of great influence in pushing the button which drove me to finally give up everything and become a bathroom cleaner in the nearest temple.

It's so easy for us to look outside and see faults with everything and everyone. Everyone who has taken birth here is fallen and full of holes. There's no doubt about it. It too easy to blame the leaders of ISKCON for not protecting us, not training us, etc. It's too easy to blame our wife or husband, current or former, for our difficulties. But the only reality is that we have created our own beds and we must live in it. Expecting to change our consciousness by adjusting the external circumstances is madness.

If we desire to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness there is no shortage of directions. I have yet to find one question in any subject matter not thoroughly answered repeatedly in many ways in the literature left us by Srila Prabhupada. Everything is there, but it is up to us to hear and follow. No one can chant for us. No one can sit and hear Srila Prabhupada's words for us. No one can offer the prayers, rise early, worship the Deity, honor the *prasadam*, or worship Tulasi devi for us. If we

at all desire to taste the fruits of *bhakti-marg*, then it behooves us to find the ways and means to always perform these standard Vaisnavas activities. If we do this then the fruit is assured. If we neglect these basic and our minds get absorbed in trying to be happy in mundane relationships (relationships based upon sex-attraction) we'll my friends it is our fault only.

It does take determination to execute Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and I for one did not have the determination for years and years. I had some desire, but no strength to resist unnecessary sense gratification when it was readily available. For years I was thinking that I would never be able to follow my vows again.

By the grace of Srila Prabhupada & Lord Caitanya, I was able to get the association of pure devotees, take the dust from their lotus feet, drink the water that has washed their feet, and take the remnants of their *prasadam*, and most of all hear the words from their lotus lips. This association is the benediction of Srila Prabhupada and it has given me the desire, and determination to try again to be an obedient and faithful son to Srila Prabhupada.

It been almost two years now without any violation of my sacred vows. Once again I can look at Srila Prabhupada's form and feel his loving smile. Anyone who tells me that Srila Prabhupada is dead and gone, I am sorry to say, has little understanding of who Srila Prabhupada is.

Every morning as I bathe and dress our Deities I listen to Srila Prabhupada's classes, while I gaze upon his life-size *murti* which sits in the temple room. He is cent per cent present right now, today as he was in 1970! Of this there is no doubt.

Personally I have never felt more alive, happy, and eager to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness. as I do today, and this do to simply agreeing once again to follow Him, not attempt to become him. He is great I am insignificant. May it always remain so.

Uttamasloka, Rksaraja, Dayananda, Yadubara, and all of you, I would love to

hear from you. The association with my Godbrothers and the chance to be your servant is my life and soul!

#### WHERE IN THE WORLD IS . . . ?

I really need to find Cidananda dasa, who first planned to come to Australia to establish a center in 1968. Last seen Ratha-yatra L.A. a few years ago. Can you help? Kurma dasa, P.O. Box 125, Albert Park VIC 3206, Australia.

#### ESSAYS

Tribhuvaneshvari, My Godsister and Friend  
Manjari dasi  
San Francisco, CA

Tribhuvaneshvari devi dasi was born Tuija Rita Marianne Salomaa on February 3, 1951 in Helsinki, Finland. She lived, for almost 43 years, a life of great intensity, love, pain and accomplishment. Tribhuvaneshvari was an artist, a musician, a healer, and a disciple of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. After a hard-fought battle with breast cancer, she died on January 12, 1994. She is survived by her parents and sister, her husband, Vicaru dasa, and her children, Sean Kari, age 22, Devesha, age 14, and Gitanjali, age 9. Tribhuv is remembered and loved by her many friends. Here are a few memories. They offer a brief glimpse of the many facets of our sparkling, jewel like Godsister.

Tribhuvaneshvari was wild, fun and funny, with the punning wit of someone for whom English is a second language. She was never boring, always intensely feeling something. At the same time, she was frequently in physical pain and dissatisfied with her work and life. Tribhuv always felt that she didn't belong here, like she was from another planet, another dimension—Pleiades to be exact. Actually, she was quite certain about it. I have no way of knowing, but it was clear she was not ordinary—she had extraordinary gifts and talents.

Her music was celestial. It elevated your consciousness to hear her play piano. Her mother said that when Tribhuv was five, she

would watch her older sister take piano lessons. When her sister was finished, she would climb up on the piano bench and play the entire piece from memory. She once composed a classical piece that she explained was really meant to be a symphony. And as she played it, she would interject, "Here's where the violins come in . . . There should be horns here . . ." She would be hearing the instruments in her mind. Her hearing was unusually acute. She once sang a mesmerizing song based on the nuances of tone that only she could discern in the single beat of a drum. Another time she composed a haunting melody with the slow toot of pan pipes. She put the names of Tulasi to song, and Gopinatha and Hare Kṛṣṇa to piano.

It is for her art, however, that Tribhuvaneshvari is best known. If an artist can be stereotyped, she was the epitome: flamboyant, scatter-brained, at times deeply depressed, able to turn anything she touched into beauty. She was driven to express herself, impelled to create. Her home was a gallery of her eclectic designs: paintings, sculpture, lamps, masks, rattles and room dividers. One of her first services for the Toronto Temple was to paint pictures of Kṛṣṇa. She met her husband when he supervised this artwork. "One of the things that struck me about her was how effortlessly she painted," Vicaru said. "She copied these pictures from the books and then improved on them. Invariably they were better than the originals." Today four of her paintings hang in the Toronto Temple and one, a painting of the naming ceremony of Kṛṣṇa and Balarama, is in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

One of Tribhuvaneshvari's best loved applications of her art was painting Deities. The Toronto Temple valued her painting Radha-Kṣiracora Gopinatha so much they paid her way to Canada. "She was the best Deity painter ever," said Toronto president, Bhakti Marg Swami. "Our Radharani was already unique, but when Tribhuvaneshvari would paint her eyes and lips, Radharani was just stunning. Stunning." Tribhuvaneshvari painted the Deities in Berkeley whenever it was needed. Srila Prabhupada's Deity, Govinda, whose repeated washings had left his silver form almost paint-free, was re-



vealed by Tribhuvaneshvari to be to-die-for handsome. Just before the last Ratha yatra she started chemotherapy. After treatment she would go straight to the temple to paint Lord Jagannatha, not returning home until late at night. The treatment made her weak and her body was wracked with pain. Once she collapsed in agony while painting. "I really thought she was going to leave her body right there," the pujari, Satya said. "She was screaming in pain." But Tribhuv didn't leave; she waited until the pain had subsided and resumed her work.

Pain was a part of Tribhuvaneshvari's life, even before cancer. She had been married and had a son, Sean, when she was nineteen. Sean had been cared for by her mother because after the divorce Tribhuv's life had been unstable. But after she joined the temple and especially after she got remarried, she wanted Sean to live with her. But her mother would not give him up. A bitter court battle was fought and Tribhuv lost custody. She was devastated. At that time, Srila Prabhupada came to Toronto. During a press conference, reporters were trying to make Prabhupada make a sexist remark by asking about women in the movement. Srila Prabhupada said that women who have joined the Hare Krsna movement were suffering before, "You can ask any of them," he said, and looked directly at Tribhuvaneshvari. He went on, "I promise any woman who joins this movement that they'll have a good husband to take care of them."

Perhaps it was Tribhuvaneshvari's suffering that gave her the gentle compassion and kindheartedness for which she is remembered by all her friends. During her mid and late thirties, she became involved in New Age and Native American healing circles—intensely involved, of course; for Tribhuv there was no middle ground. Tribhuvaneshvari had an extraordinary ability to experience other realities, or paranormal phenomena. She was psychic, she would have dreams that would come true, she saw little gnomes in the Toronto temple. When they were first married, Vicaru was amazed: "She described a dream to me and I found myself listening to another world,

another plane of consciousness. And I thought, 'Who is this person?' Here I just made a huge commitment and there is this other side to her that is so far out. But that was the way she was. These things were real to her and within that reality she was quite consistent."

She used these healing paths to understand and accept herself and her feelings of alienation, and to calm her inner demons. In each one of these experiences, she would become a teacher; she was so anxious to give and share the realizations she received.

Because Tribhuvaneshvari, first and foremost considered herself a devotee of Krsna, Krsna took care of her. Her realizations in whatever she did always brought her back to Him. An example is her connection to Pleiades. Pleiades is known in Vedic terminology as the Krittika constellation. The Krittikas were demigoddesses from whom Kartikeya (the son of Lord Shiva, also known as Mars, the God of War) gets his name. Tribhuv was born in Scandinavia, which she liked to say was derived from the Sanskrit word Skanda, another name for Kartikeya. She just loved these patterns of connection—and they all brought her back to Krsna. Toward the end of her life, she seriously worshipped Lord Nrsimhadeva, chanting the *Nrsimha-kavacha-stotram* from the Brahmanda Purana three times a day and distributing the prayers to all her friends. She worshipped Lord Nrsimhadeva because of the protection He gives his devotees, especially in times of danger or distress. Not surprisingly, Lord Nrsimhadeva is also the worshipable Deity of Kartikeya.

"Tribhuvaneshvari did not have an easy death," relates Viddhi Bhakti, who took care of her through much of her illness. "She did not want to leave her children." Once, when Srila Prabhupada was lecturing in New York, he said, "Death is when the body becomes too painful and the soul has to leave." Tribhuv suffered from ever-increasing pain during the last year and a half of her life. She did not want to die and, as long as she had a chance, fought hard, first with nutritional

therapy and finally with Western medicine. But at the end, when she knew there was no hope, she slipped away very quickly. Vrnda devi, her dear friend, understood why. She told this story at her funeral. "We were on *sankirtana* in Toronto. You remember the old days—30 below and we would be out in saris and long underwear. All of a sudden this beautiful woman comes running out of a restaurant and starts to stuff something in my book bag. I look and it's butter! 'It's for Krsna,' she says, 'He's the butter thief isn't He?' Somehow Tribhuv had heard about Krsna stealing butter and she was stealing it from the restaurant she worked in to give to Him. Eventually the owner found out and was going to fire her. But just as he was about to tell her she was fired, she said, 'Hold it. I quit.' So, the doctors were giving her six months in a terminal condition but she said, 'Oh no. I'm out of here.'"

Tribhuvaneshvari left her body during a *kirtana* led by her husband. Her mother, her children, and many of her friends were present. She was a wonderful friend. We will miss her greatly.

#### Remembrances

Ksira Cora, Tribhuv's Godsister from Toronto:

"Tribhuvaneshvari was the first person to turn me on to stealing *maha* sweets. I happened upon her on the balcony and she said, 'Oh, you've found me. Sit down, sit down.' And she showed me how to eat the *barfi* and *puris* she'd nipped from the cabinets. You wrap the *barfi* inside the *puris*. Delicious."

"Tribhuvaneshvari and Vicaru were married with four other couples. In those days everyone was austere—a ripped shirt was a sign of asceticism. But Tribhuvaneshvari was never into that. The whole wedding was late because she was getting dressed. When she finally walked into temple room, though, she was so beautiful she took our breath away. She was like spring incarnate. The devotees were not used to seeing such beauty in human form and they were embarrassed. But as I saw it, aversion was just the opposite of attraction."

"One day, when the temple was still on

Gerard St., the devotees decided to check out the attic. They brought down 19th century books and letters and pottery. In retrospect they could have given them to a museum, but they didn't think of that and threw everything out. A few days later all the devotees got attacked by ghosts. I think Tribhuvaneshvari was the first. They would have visions and dreams of three men doing horrible things and would wake up feeling hands on their bodies. We had *kirtanas*, blew conchshells—did everything we could. Finally Tribhuv called her sister, Hilikka. Hilikka went up to the attic and, after some time came down. She said 'There are three men up there. You took some of their belongings. They want them back.' But we had thrown them out. Hilikka's hands were dirty from the attic. We asked if she wanted to wash them. 'No,' she said, 'I'm taking it home. They won't bother you again.' And she walked out. We were never bothered again. I tell you this to show that she came from an extraordinary family."

Satya, Tribhuv's Godsister from Berkeley:

"The Deity, Govinda, is small, about 10" tall. His helmet is very small also. And on his helmet are tiny jewels. Tribhuvaneshvari painted each jewel with such care. She was meditating on decorating Govinda with rubies, emeralds diamonds and pearls as she painted."

"While she was painting, she had her daughter, Gita, reading Krsna book. The scene was so beautiful, I started to cry."

"One time, as she was painting she told me that Prabhupada told her that once she started to paint she should not stop because the Deities are eating or being offered *arati* or anything. But when I had to offer *arati* to the Deities, she humbly asked, 'Do you want me to go?'"

Karlapati, Tribhuv's Godsister from Marin:

"She had amazing humility," her friend, Karlapati recalls. "She thought of herself as the most fallen, the most desirous of Krsna's association. One of her lamentations was that she wasn't doing anything, wasn't able to preach. But the proof that she was that so many people



who have nothing to do with Kṛṣṇa were brought closer to Him through Tribhuvaneshvari."

**Speak the Truth, But Speak it Palatably**  
Akhileśvara dasa  
Quebec, Canada

Srila Prabhupada comments: "In this material world only palatable truth should be spoken.... Devotees always humbly offer respect to everyone, but when there is a discussion on a point of *sastra*, they do not observe the usual etiquette, *satyam bruyat priyam bruyat*. They speak only *satyam* (truth), although it may not necessarily be *priyam* (palatable)." *Vaiṣṇava Verse Book*

The Toronto Ratha-yatra festival was blissful. With a few devotees, we are heading back to the temple by bus. Suddenly, one of us notices that someone had forgotten their purse on the seat. We point it out to the lady nearest to it. She grabs the purse, rushes to the front, and tells the driver to stop the bus. She then runs in the street to find the owner.

The *brahmacari* sitting next to me feels like sharing his realization on the incident and tells me in confidence:

"A devotee would have kept the money and used it for Kṛṣṇa."

I am French from France, so I have a hard time with the "American mentality" to the extent where I developed a kind of inferiority complex. It originated during the time when Bhagavan and his men were in France. I've recovered now, more or less. I was not sure if the *brahmacari* was just joking or if he was serious, so I looked at him attentively trying to read his thoughts. I have seen him around for some time. He always appeared sober, serious and enthusiastic; the kind of devotee we would like to have in our temples. Indeed, they are getting very rare these days. He was not a Prabhupada disciple, and I didn't know who was his *guru*. He was smiling at me waiting for an answer. I wasn't sure how to respond. So, I decided to be straightforward and said:

"Well, I certainly would have done the same thing as the lady."

"That's not what Prabhupada said," was his answer. "He wrote in his book that if someone finds some money in the street and ignores it, he is misbehaving; it's better to pick it up and bring it to the owner. But better than that, is to take it and keep it for the service of Kṛṣṇa."

I was shocked.

I knew the reference he quoted from Srila Prabhupada, but that's not what Prabhupada was saying; I couldn't paraphrase him. I tried my best to rectify the misconception by stressing the fact that a devotee, unless he is on a very advanced platform of spiritual life, should always behave according to the highest moral codes of humanity. But he stuck to his belief.

Frustrated, I tell him: "You think as you like; I gave you my opinion." I kept silent, ignoring him.

After a few minutes he spoke again: "Actually you are right." He went on explaining how in Vrndavana a merchant made a mistake, and gave him 3,000 rupees extra. He took the money without saying anything. But a few days later, the merchant came back and told him about the mistake. Our *brahmacari* couldn't remember such an incident and he kept the difference. However, before leaving Vrndavana, he felt so guilty that he gave back the money through someone else.

Another loss for ISKCON.

"You see," I acknowledged happily, "we are not so transcendental as we would like to believe; we'd better stop with all those bad habits and stick to morality before everything else."

Next day, instead of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class, there was an *istagosthi* given by Anuttama Prabhu on communication. He came actually to give a workshop on this matter. He explained to the assembled devotees how to answer the phone, to always be kind to others, proved through examples that it is more rewarding in the long run to have an attitude of servitorship toward the *karmis*, especially those who come to visit the temples, that someone in the BBT

had found a revolutionary idea: we should cultivate the people who buy our books (the word revolutionary was used), etc. Anuttama is a nice fellow; he is doing a good service and he has the aptitude for it. I enjoyed his presentation and the nice and funny examples he gave, but I was upset listening about moral instructions we usually receive when we are in grade 4 or 5. I am forty years old now and living with a Movement that is supposed to be teaching the highest values in life. Twenty years ago I left the Christians and the Muslims with their basic principles and here I am at the starting point again. Obviously something went wrong. But there was another thought which disturbed me. While I was listening to Anuttama, I was feeling uneasy with his approach. At the end of his lecture, I revealed my bewilderment, but I couldn't figure out his answer. What I actually told him, was that he dealt only with the disease, but failed to expose its sources. I think this is the crucial problem. Naturally, if we can solve the disturbances where they originated, everything else will be adjusted and we will save much energy. After the class I tried my best to have a talk with him, but he was in a hurry for an appointment he had with a journalist. In our brief exchanges I reiterated my first question: "Why are devotees acting with so much incivility?" "They are too fanatical" was his answer. "Fanatical!" I repeated. "Why are they fanatical?" No time for an answer. He was already running back to the temple trying to find his partner he had to go with to the important appointment. Somehow or other destiny did not allow me to communicate with him.

Let's speak frankly.

When I came back to Montreal I read a nice article in *Pṛiti-lakṣanam* by Chitraketu dasa but which puzzled me by his conclusion. Here it is: "Of course, it needs to be borne in mind that such prescriptions come under the heading of *Niti-sastra*, or moral instructions of the regulation of human society, and as such they may or may not be applicable to the devotee who works under the direct instruction of the Lord." Why do we always insinuate that in our Movement some devotees are beyond those rules? Why don't we just be realistic and stop all the non-

sense that is going on in the name of Kṛṣṇa. An example: how many went in the streets with stickers collecting for schools, hungry children or some fictitious charitable trust, and are now still doing it for their *grha*? "Oh, they gave so many years of their life for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, therefore we should see this so called deviation (to use an euphemism) as a legitimate one (not to say transcendental)," is our attitude toward them.

A classical example, among others, which has helped to create this confusion, is the passage in the Mahabharata when Maharaja Yudhiṣṭhira is asked to lie for the sake of Kṛṣṇa. It is repeatedly given by lecturers to stress the exalted position of a devotee. We misunderstand our real position; we are looking at devotees with an ideal vision, instead of a practical one.

What is the cause for this, who is responsible and how to solve the problem? These are the questions.

**Preaching in America**  
Teresa  
Oregon

Continued from Issue #11, PART II

In my first years as a devotee I saw more and more that the essential philosophy was perfect and the path of *bhakti-yoga* sublime and beautiful and powerfully efficacious in healing the divided and grasping mind, by joining with others to serve Kṛṣṇa and worship the holy name, form and pastimes. But I was baffled to see that there was such total permission to maintain, flaunt and feed certain attitudes that are conventionally held to be counterproductive to spiritual advancement. I'm referring to thought patterns (that are unnecessary and inessential to the philosophy or practice) that directly and systematically contribute to *mayā*, to maintaining the veils of illusions of separation from God, body consciousness in its subtle forms, the false ego, etc.

In the Vedic scriptures and teachings of Srila Prabhupada, certainly the eternal truth of the path of mastery through surrender is laid out. I'm thinking of the 26 qualities of a devotee and many references to how compassionate and tolerant a devotee should be. Spiritual aspirants are usually trying to cultivate attitudes of peace,

unity, humility, equal vision and forgiveness. This is part of the real razor's edge of spiritual life. Isn't this concrete, moment-by-moment surrender to serving the presence of the Lord the heart of the matter? Can anyone really claim that the essential cutting edge must involve denigrating and attacking various groups of people or even drawing strong distinctions that emphasize separation? One might say that we live in times of special emergency—do we really have time to indulge in the nonessential?

Perhaps Prabhupada's disciples haven't been astute enough to realize that while a *mahatma* can get away with sometimes voicing ideas that seem to involve levels of censure and condemnation, the *mahatma* is actually reviling trends or practices of degradation or nonsense, not the people themselves. There is always incredible love in his heart, even when he is describing the different kinds of human beings or classes of devotees. And while it is actually true that we live in a society of dogs and hogs and demons, it seems to me that it is harmful and sabotages our spiritual life for us to think and say it over and over. Devotees who give the classes flagrantly attacking those who practice different religions or insulting, various saints, historical or contemporary, as having "low realizations" or women as having a "low consciousness" etc., are just plunging deeper into the mire of *maya*, and binding themselves to illusion. I am astonished and chagrined that these standard attack ploys are so universally taken for granted in ISKCON. Why isn't it obvious that all thought forms holding ideas of we-them duality, separation and attack/defense all ruin spiritual life by binding us to the very illusions we should be trying to root out? Why do devotees mock the pitiful and harmful illusions of nationalistic chauvinism, yet not recognize that chauvinism based on sex, caste or cult can be just as bad?

Sometimes one sees the initiated devotee who believes quite consciously that he is truly superior to almost all other people, and his mind is usually preoccupied with resentments of offenses against himself. The institution

fosters focus on external and mechanical aspects of spiritual life—personal appearance and prescribed behavior—over the inner life of the holy war on the Kuruksetra of the heart. It thus becomes possible to forget that pride is the greatest pitfall on the path. Without an inward attitude of self-correction in letting God's love and light heal and transcend our tendencies to judgment and false pride and lording it over others, it doesn't matter how many rounds we chant—we'll just be spinning our wheels, going nowhere. Why waste time? The house is on fire and it's time to get out.

In my view, all the elitism and we-them dualities need to be seriously played down, even the *karmi*/devotee distinction. I think we need to be more observant and sensitive about the effects our thoughts and words have on ourselves and others. Perhaps the elitism becomes a smokescreen that distracts us from the delicate inner work of purification we need to do to become pure devotees. In the beginning I was alternately shocked and mystified that people seriously thought they were on a spiritual path while continually striking postures to puff up their egos by means of projecting their own inferior or unclean qualities onto other groups or women. I was also puzzled that they didn't see the dangerous *karma* they were attracting in judging and condemning and that they didn't feel what bad taste it is to attack another esoteric path and its practitioners. Blanket condemnation of Buddhism, for example, would be less egregious if there were some acknowledgment of the fact that so many have made genuine spiritual advancement through it. I used to find all these attacks unseemly and demoralizing. It took me a long time and the mercy of an advanced devotee to put things in perspective and somehow see beyond the negative veils (of chauvinism, misogyny etc.) to a sense of the essence beyond the disturbances. But I still feel that devotees need to understand that if they are going to adhere to these negative attitudes they should realize that they are dangerous double-edged swords

that can cut both ways—they definitely need to be balanced with huge doses of honesty and humility.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that we need to wake up and look around a bit. Until now, the most committed devotees have been afraid to think or speak except in the formulaic grooves. Afraid to fall into heterodoxy. I'm suggesting that some tenaciously entrenched patterns of judgment and attacks that close the heart and harden the false ego are a basic root problem in our society. Everyone will benefit if we take mature responsibility for our thought forms and what they create in our world. The many sincere and elevated souls in our society deeply appreciate the great blessing of devotee association and want to keep the temples open to glorify Kṛṣṇa. I feel that they will want to make *bhakti-yoga* more accessible to newcomers by considering these slight modifications that don't alter anything of substance at all. The items of the banquet feast of Lord Caitanya's path remain the same, but the tablecloth under them needs to be cleaned up a little. And all of the above is strictly minor compared to the great thing that Lord Caitanya's movement is still going on—but how can be support and expand it? It's good that some devotees have held on tightly to the ideals and stoically endured or ignored so much discouragement. There comes a time though when we should look closely and realistically at the actual results of our endeavors. When a cook experiences problems or failures with a preparation, he doesn't throw out the recipe or just keep repeating the failures; but he analyses some details in the handling that will give better results. And devotees who want to manifest Vedic culture in any way should consider this: if you want to build culture, you must first build community, and you build community by listening and trying to understand others. (End)

Prabhupada Meditation  
Thakor Topiwala

I have been studying the mission of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada for the last several years at many different angles.

I was born and raised in India where Hindu

religion is widely practiced for many, many years. Historically there have been so many saints, sages, philosophers, scientists, politicians and others who have presented their views and commentary on India's most profound Vedanta philosophy especially the message of *Bhagavad-gita* by which they reach different conclusion. Srila Prabhupada also mentions this in his Bhaktivedanta purports.

After reading *Bhagavad-gita* by Srila Prabhupada sometimes I wonder how in the world anyone can go wrong or deviate from what Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra for the benefit of mankind. Arjuna made all necessary inquiries to establish who Kṛṣṇa is. What this material and spiritual world is. What is each living entity's relationship to the God, the process for approaching Him and so on. Srila Prabhupada explained the whole philosophy in a very simple manner. With love and devotion.

To accept and follow the teaching of Vedanta philosophy may be another thing but nobody can deny the fundamental fact that we are all subjected to the laws of nature and that all have to go through the cycle of birth, death, disease and old age—nobody can change those laws.

Religions have been practiced in India with different motives for many, many years—people in general are not even aware of personal and impersonal feature of the Lord. Specially Prabhupada is the one who define thoroughly well the Mayavada philosophy. He is the one who explained the direct relationship of every living entities to the Lord in very, very simple language.

It is the sincere work of many Eastern and Western devotees who have been continuously serving Srila Prabhupada in different capacities and different understandings.

We all pray to the Almighty Lord, Sri Kṛṣṇa and Srila Prabhupada to bless us so we all can gain enough strength to remove our impurities in our heart and serve him selflessly.

All glories to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada and all glories to the devotees.



## The Nature of Identity Devi dasi

Manhattan Beach, CA

Action, which defines a man and describes his character, is action which has been repeated over and over, and so, in time, becomes a coherent and relatively independent mode of behavior. At first, it may have been fumbling and uncertain; it may have required attention, effort, will. However, if one perseveres on any such course, it eventually requires less effort, less attention; it begins to function smoothly; the small component behaviors become integrated within a larger pattern, which carries its own authority. Such a mode then pervades the entire person, permeates other modes, colors other qualities, is living and operative, even when the action is not being performed, or even considered.

Identity is comprised of all such modes as may characterize a person, existing in varying degrees of integration and conflict. The greater the conflict, the more unstable the identity; the more harmonious the modes, the more durable the character. Identity defined by action is past and present. It may also foretell the future, but not necessarily.

Sometimes we act covertly, and so conceal from ourselves what we are. Then one day, perhaps, we drop the pretense; the illusion cracks. We have the sense of an identity that has existed all along. In some way we knew it, but would not let ourselves know that we knew it. But now we do. We may then conclude that this identity is our "nature;" that it is written in the stars, a preexisting pattern. However, it was, in fact, written only in our past choices.

The identity defined by action is not, therefore, the whole person. Within us lies the potentiality for change, the freedom to choose other courses. Or we might just say, "That's the way I am, might as well accept it," and exploit what we have been in the past, to avoid responsibility for what we shall be in the future.

Often we do not choose, but drift into

those modes which eventually define us. Circumstances push, and we yield. We did not choose to be what we have become; but gradually, imperceptibly, became what we are by drifting into doing those things we characteristically do.

We are wise to believe it difficult to change, to recognize that character has a forward thrust, which tends to carry it, unaltered, into the future. But we need not believe it impossible to change. Our present and future actions may take us on a different course, which will, in time, comprise a different identity. It happens, sometimes.

## Bodily or Spiritual Identity?

Gaurangi dasi

New Delhi, India

Gadi dasa would like our Society to regain its strong masculine identity and he seems to deplore the fact that in some of our communities the ruling identity is strongly feminine. What he is deploring, I see in fact as a sign of progress in our Society: let whoever is spiritually and materially qualified, regardless of his or her body, be given responsibilities, respect, position for the sake of vigorously pushing on the mission of Lord Caitanya. What is most important, the preaching to go on with doubled strength or a conservative adherence to Vedic principles that prevents valuable members of our society in women bodies to give their full talents to our Society?

## Are We a Vedic Society or Lord Caitanya's Movement?

All the great *acaryas*, those who have propagated the mission of the Lord in this material world in a very substantial way, have been criticized for introducing new ways to the traditional Vedic norms: Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati met with so much hostility for giving *brahmana* initiation to devotees not born in brahminical families, Srila Prabhupada was also severely

criticized for letting women in ISKCON, giving them initiation and *asramas* to live in, allowing them to fully participate in devotional activities such as Deity worship, preaching, lecturing, etc. For all their adherence to strict Vedic standards, what have all the critics accomplished? How many souls have they saved from going to hell?

## Do All Men Fit in the Same Mold?

We are in Kali-yuga and the distinction between men and women is not so clear. In general women take more subservient roles to men; they feel the need for protection and are happy in this situation. But the image of the man as the provider does not always fit with real life situation. Many families, including devotee families, are dependent for their economic survival on the efforts and hard work of the wife. In the world outside the same thing takes place: some men stay home and prefer to take care of the house and kids while the wife goes to work to make a living. The general characteristic attributed to one sex don't fit all members of that sex. Not all women are followers: actually in the worldwide religious scene, particularly the new age movement, many leaders are women. It seems more practical to consider the actual qualities and propensities of the particular person, not the ones he or she is supposed to manifest according to his/her sex. Does the kind of sex organs one has determines the kind of person one is? This question sounds a little ridiculous, put in this crude way, but it describes the underlying principle of segregation and discrimination based on the body. Let's look at the real person! According to our Krsna conscious philosophy we are spirit souls, this is our real and eternal identity. Certainly we are souls covered by a material body. Few of us are fully self-realized souls; most of us are struggling to act on the platform of the soul. The question is: when to identify with the body, for the sake of acceptable social behavior, and when to identify as a pure spirit soul? If women are prevented or restricted to engage in particular devotional activities in the common temple grounds or temple room on the basis of their body, does not this reinforce, instead of dimin-

ish the bodily concept of life? This is not to speak of the serious psychological and emotional damages they will suffer because of restricted self-expression. We will elaborate more on this topic further on.

## Where Are the Men?

Recently a friend pointed out to me that I was exhibiting the same attitude that I deplore in some men: I was disturbed to see many male devotees incapable and unwilling to assume responsibilities in our movement and in their lives. They did not fit the ideal of a man as described in the scriptures: protective, taking initiative, more spiritually inclined and endowed, responsible, intelligent, etc. These men were more like children in need of a protective mother who was going to do everything for them, give them directions and orders and above all do all the hard work herself, like a good mother. As I am expected as a "woman" to match a certain pattern and fit in a particular mold, I was similarly expecting them to nicely fit the description of the ideal "man." But reality is different. Life is full of variety.

Even if some kinds of women, the *ksatriya* type, the leader, the austere devotee, the renounced one, the one who does not want to get married, etc., are not so much described in the pages of the *Bhagavatam*, they exist. Here we are! Nobody is going to deny our existence by quoting the *sastras*. Personally I did not join the Vedic Society, attracted by the perspective of making babies and *capatis* the Vedic way; these activities are quite honorable and essential, but there is more to Lord Caitanya's movement. I was attracted by the magnanimous, revolutionary and sublime nature of the preaching movement of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He was a spiritual movement in which I could fit as a person who likes action and revolution.

My childhood heroin was not hiding behind a veil, too shy to even say a word or show her face to the sun. She had a sword and was facing an entire army! This heroin was Joanne d'art, the famous young French cowherd girl who took the lead of the French army to kick out the British invaders. Of course she was later accused of

being a witch and burned alive at the stake, which seems to be the fate of many uncommon women. Here was a woman with courage! And that is one quality that is sorely lacking in many Kali-yuga men: courage! No wonder that some of them get disturbed when they see a woman who has more talent and qualities than they. They feel inferior, envious, threatened, because their false ego had been too strongly blown-up out of proportion, and what they really are is not matching with what they are supposed to be. Maybe Gadi dasa is deploring the weakness and lethargy of many men, their lack of strong masculine qualities, when he expresses the wish that our Society would regain its strong masculine identity.

#### Women's Place in Our Society

Certainly we do have these material bodies and cannot ignore them. Overall men and women have different psychological natures. There has to be certain rules of behavior and discrimination for order. But the highest order will prevail when we all become more spiritually advanced in our understanding of being eternal spirit souls, servants of Kṛṣṇa. Gadi Prabhu argues that the Vedic structure keeps women far in the background, protected and satisfied. As far as protection goes, there is a need for lots of improvement in our Society; some protection is provided, but there are still situations of neglect and abuse; in the name of protection what also takes place is suppression and suffocation of genuine spiritual aspirations. As far as satisfaction goes, I see enough of our women devotees experiencing deep unhappiness, frustration and anxiety. They do not feel happy to be pushed in the background, when it is not out the door, and not always much wanted. Someone might say that it is good for their spiritual advancement to take a more humble position; but the fact is that you cannot force anyone to become humble in this way. In addition we women do not want to be selfish and keep this treasure of humility just to ourselves, we would like to share it with our Godbrothers also. I know that in the near future there will be women in

the GBC and others will occupy the position of gurus. At the moment lots of us are trying to figure out how to live as devotees in a male dominated Society, which is not always easy and poses serious problems.

#### How Women Deal with Frustration and Bitterness

What do you say to a woman who has been seriously practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness for many years and goes to an ISKCON temple to find out that after all she does not really belong there? She cannot go on the altar to worship the Deities; she cannot lead any *kirtana* or *bhajana*; she cannot give any class and is barely invited to recite the Sanskrit *slokas*; she is not allotted a peaceful place to sit during classes; she is not allowed to offer any *arati* during Guru-puja; she has to stand out in the courtyard in the cold and rain in winter if she wants to worship Tulasi properly. She is lucky if they think to put a carpet for her and her Godsisters in winter, while the men systematically are provided with one. What do you say to such a woman if she enjoys singing and leading *kirtanas* for the pleasure of the Lord or give classes? Is she to remain only a witness to the devotional activities of the male devotees? Is going to the temple like going to a show: you cannot participate, except as a spectator. Is she supposed to stay home, worship her own Deities and engage in her devotional activities more as a congregational member? Is she supposed to start a women's temple on the side or alternative separate programs, where she can engage in all kinds of devotional activities to her heart's content? Is she supposed to absorb all this repression and gradually become more morose, frustrated, dissatisfied, negative, dysfunctional, self-destructive and totally disgusted? These are very vital and serious questions that need to be answered and discussed in devotees forums and addressed by the leaders of our Movement.

Personally I was starting to experience serious feeling of frustration when I realized that I had to save myself first. While

residing at the Paris temple last summer, I came to experience very extreme feelings of anger and frustration while going to the *Bhagavatam* class. I am 45 years old, have been a devotee for 15 years, used to be a teacher, and I have to witness my young Godbrother repeatedly invited to give *Bhagavatam* class while I had to just sit and not say a word. I just did not want to go to *Bhagavatam* class any longer. Somehow I did not boycott it and managed to survive, preaching to myself that there is some progress in ISKCON, already many women are invited to participate more all over the world, I had to be patient, etc., etc. I tried to see the good things and not focus on the negative ones; but not everybody can do this all their life. There is a price to pay for absorbing anger, frustration and other negative feelings. Not everyone can handle it nicely without serious psychological problems. The repressed positive expression will manifest itself in negative and even destructive patterns of behavior.

#### The Strong Ruling Male Identity

Just recently in Mayapur, I sadly witnessed another expression of the "strong ruling male identity": on the very *samadhi* monument of Srila Prabhupada, there is a line of figures in relief depicting the *sankirtana* movement of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Guess what? There is not a single woman depicted there! They probably all went on traveling *sankirtana* in their special palanquin, for chastity's sake! I've heard that "they" were supposed to put a few women on the *samadhi* around a corner somewhere, but changed their minds. This *samadhi* will remain for centuries as a symbol of narrow-mindedness and total misunderstanding of who are Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada, and what is their message! It is also an insult to all of us, women devotees, sacrificing so much and working so hard to push on the preaching movement of Lord Caitanya. These considerations should make Gadi dasa reevaluate his definition of "peace." What kind of peace is he talking about? Real violence is what prevents the spiritual progress of the soul. Whatever restricts, inhibits and limits the flow of mercy of Lord Caitanya is violence. Whoever ignores, insults, belittles a

preacher who has dedicated her life and soul to save others is committing an offense and is also violent. As far as strength goes, is there any need to say that the more preachers, the stronger the preaching force, and the stronger each preacher, the stronger the preaching army! Simply mathematics!

#### The Front Line Preachers

Even though the *sannyasa* order is specifically designed for preaching, why limit the preaching front to only a few men, along with the other masculine members? The essential thing for our Society is not to have a strong masculine identity, but more transcendentalists, more mature devotees, more qualified preachers of all sexes and *asramas*, and more devotees in a preaching mood, no matter what their service or occupation may be. The "preaching" itself has so many facets. This preaching mood can express itself by the act of giving Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others directly through book distribution, preaching programs, etc., and also by being exemplary ourselves and showing practical applications of our philosophy so that the whole society can be respiritualized (self-sufficient farms, cow protection, spiritual television, transcendental art, etc.). A group of devotees whose role in regard to preaching is not so clearly defined is the *brahmacharinis* wearing white and not wanting to get married. While some are widows, others choose to remain single for the sake of devoting their energy to the preaching mission. They need to be given more opportunities to share their knowledge and realizations with other devotees, just as *sannyasis* are. If a woman gives up all dependence on a man, which is supposedly more difficult for her to do due to her nature, but depends only on the Lord, she should be given an equal chance to experience the higher taste of preaching. Already it is happening: Mother Jadurani and a few other women are being invited to other countries and temples only for the sake of enlightening others. The movement of Lord Caitanya keeps on expanding and we can witness how the boon granted by Lord Caitanya to Advaita Acarya is becoming manifest: Not only women can be delivered and attain the highest goal of life, but they also are playing a



vital role in delivering others. What is presently happening might not have been described in details in the pages of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, but all we have to do is open our eyes.

#### Please Handle With Caution!

Gadi dasa states that it is now politically incorrect to say practically anything against women. Yes, it is prudent to be cautious. The fact is that women in ISKCON are sensitive, they have seen, heard and suffered enough. Enough is enough! Some of them left, some just retreated in some way or other, some just tolerate it all, some do not mind the status quo, some are just not doing any of these things, praying for a brighter future and trying to see the good and positive despite all the problems and difficulties. Some try to laugh it out, because if the start crying, they are not going to stop. It is high time to have forums and discuss these topics openly in the light of Srila Prabhupada's teachings, example and mood and plain common sense. In fact these discussions have already taken place with very positive results and changes in some countries like Australia and America. Harikesa Swami circulated a memo to all the temples under his care, explaining how women devotees should be treated with respect and consideration. USA now has the first Minister of Women affairs, Sudharma dasi. There is hope for the future, but personally I am not willing to wait too much any more. I am one of those who have enough of it.

#### How Women Deal With a Male Dominated World

This material world is dominated by men, let's face it, and so is ISKCON. The sad state of the world is a testimony to the results of domination by Kali-yuga men. If some enlightened women devotees of Lord Krsna assume some leading roles in our Society, what is the harm. The feminine group as a whole could bring more caring, nurturing and understanding to our society, less aggressive-

ness and over competitiveness. It seems to be a correct spiritual perspective! As far as the outside world goes, women also want a more active role in what is going on. Maybe they are tired of this male supremacy, especially when the males in power are not qualified, materially or spiritually. Why should they be subservient? In the name of *sastras* and spirituality, women do not want to be oppressed with the same attitude. It becomes even more unpalatable. If men are so much attached to exclusive domination and control, they can keep this entire material creation to exercise their *purusa* mentality; why compete and fight with them? Better we endeavor strenuously, with our woman's little brain, to go back to meet the only real *purusa*, Lord Krsna, much more attractive and loving than all these imitation *purusas* in the material world. We should thank all the males who make this world an even more unpalatable place: this material world is not a fit place for a gentleman and certainly not for a lady.

For those who object to female leadership, it might be regrettable for your spiritual life because in our devotional line we are all *dasanudasa anudasi*, ultimately servants of the *gopis* and Srimati Radharani. Also you might have difficulty accepting Prabhupada's mood in regard to women devotees. A book is presently being written about the dealings of Srila Prabhupada with his female disciples and I am sure it will shed lots of light on what Prabhupada really had in mind and his broad transcendental vision far above ours.

#### So Much to Say ... Bhuvanapavini dasi California

First, let me say that I was astounded to receive copies of *Priti-laksanam* from a God sister so soon after I began chanting *japa* again. This is coming to me at a time when I must fight physical aversion (actual nausea while chanting) because so much pain is attached to my past engagement in temple life.

There is so much I want to say, so much I want to get out of my system. I do not have a

computer (or even know how to use one), so I hope you will accept my letter. Thank you for providing this forum.

I moved into the temple in 1972 because I knew that Krsna is God and that the *Bhagavad-gita* was the Absolute Truth. Little did I know that what was to follow were to become the most painful experiences of this life. Over the next 15 years, I saw women beaten, children neglected and abused, sensitive men berated. I've seen wives and children abandoned while their husbands and fathers went off to start new families or to take premature *sannyasa* only to fall down then start new families. I have seen my son, at age 6, punched hard in the stomach by his *asrama* teacher for not chanting during *japa*. I watched as an *asrama* teacher repeatedly beat the face of his student into a gravel road. I watched as our *gurukula* boy's education was ignored, while they slipped further and further behind. I watched as ashram teachers verbally destroyed the self esteem of children of all ages in their attempt to . . . what . . . bring their students into submission? I listened to teachers instruct boys on the evils of females while I was supposed to teach my girl students to become "chaste and faithful wives." I watched as leading men in the movement volleyed for position like a bunch of material politicians while we couldn't even keep the *japa* room warm for the women and girls in the winter. I watched as my health, mental and physical, declined with overwork and was told that I had to go beg for money for my son's shoes. (18 hours of active service just wasn't enough, I guess). There is so much more, so very much more that touched my life and the life of my children personally that if I were so inclined could be a damning book. But that is not my intention. Instead let me say to those devotees who have helped me along the way, thank you for your Vaisnava kindness. Those whose actions and words cut into my heart and the heart of my children, I forgive you. Those devotees who have, in ignorance, harmed physically, emotionally and spiritually those whom you were supposed to protect, shame on you, for what goes around comes around. For the students I have had in *gurukula*, please forgive me for the many ways

I certainly failed you but remember me for the love I have/had for you all. Also I ask the forgiveness of any God sisters whom I may have hurt by words or deeds over the years.

Twenty-two years later, I still know that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I still am His part and parcel and Srila Prabhupada is still my spiritual master. No matter where we are, these things never change. No matter what body we are in, no matter what circumstances we are placed in, no one can take that away.

#### Regarding Celibacy Vrndavanalila dasi California

Why is it so "unpopular" for a devotee to be celibate in ISKCON? When we took our initiation vows didn't we promise no illicit sex? I have been celibate for a long time and the devotees seem to think that the only reason I am celibate is because I must be some kind of lesbian freak. It seems that a devotee who refuses to engage in illicit sex like everyone else does is labeled a homosexual. The way I see it is that it is OK to be celibate. I promised at initiation that I would not engage in illicit sex and therefore I don't period. I wish celibacy would become "popular" in ISKCON. I'm tired of having to defend my celibate lifestyle as though I'm some sort of criminal. It's like a person has to "apologize" for leading a celibate lifestyle.

#### Family Life and Krsna Consciousness Evolving impressions Rohininandana dasa England

##### An Edinburgh bedside:

"I've just met some amazing guys! They're sort of monks. They've got no money. They wear curtain lining material and whatever food they have they share with anyone who happens to be around."

##### High Street Kensington:

"Hey man!"

"Er, yes?"

"You don't have to smoke dope to get high."

Chant Hare Krsna!"

Kentish Town late one summer evening:  
Desolate street. Derelict houses. A night shelter for winos and bums. A group of angelic monks float over the rubble and rubbish. Aloof and radiant. They've missed the last tube back to their temple and need a place to rest. They lie on the floor wrapped in thin shawls. Visitors from another planet? They get up and leave at 3:30am.

Oxford Street on a cold, wintry day:  
Rain sluices down. Grinding traffic. Anxious shoppers hurry along. Bright, warm lights of promise in all the windows.

I watch devotees weave along the pavement. Bright wet faces. Smudged tilaka. Rain bounces from shaved heads. Arms—like flags—high in the air. Odd socks. No socks. Sodden *mrdangas*. A sticky mass of sweets in a basket. Pure joy!

I join the London Radha-Krsna Temple:  
Transcendence. Other-world. Maya or Krsna. Us and them. In or out. "You're not that body! *Hari Bol! Hari Bol!*"

Monks and nuns. No children. No old people. Prabhupada, the "Vaikuntha man," the eternally young leader of a youth movement.

Our understanding: material life's an abomination, a kind of death. Spiritual life is everything. Sex means material and no sex means spiritual. Women, children and family life are just aspects of sex. You only get married if you can't control your sex urge. Who in their right mind wants to get married? Better get up at 2:30am, chant your head off, then hit the street and chant and distribute literature like crazy. Remember, "All *karmis* are miserable, Prabhu. They only want sex."

A child moves into the temple with his mother:

We didn't think about how he'd come to be. He was there, that's all. A temple mascot. One of us, a *brahmacari*. He ran around the

temple and we played with him. He must have been a demigod in his last life.

News:

One Prabhu's got married! What a shock! I thought he was a big devotee as well. The Maharaja said that women join ISKCON just to get a husband, to snare a man. One of them's captured a *brahmacari*. He's fallen down into the deep well. We shouldn't talk about it. What's there to talk about when someone gets entangled with one of those Maya devis? . . . Unless they're also interested in such stool.

We're not human beings, we're spirit souls.

Krsna consciousness is for the strong. Those who want to get married are weak. And who wants to look weak?

More marriages:

"I'm sorry Prabhu, I've got to go now, my wife's waiting for me."

Children:

Noisy; an interference; products of sex; future hope (somehow).

After my marriage:

Am I really married?

The wife:

Woman; faceless servant; helpmate; sexual channel; mother; object to renounce.

I preach in distant places. "Right now, although I'm not with my wife, I'm confident that she's serving Krsna and she knows the same about me."

Years of shame roll by.

A House for Everyone:

Krsna consciousness is a spiritual culture, a way of life.

The *grhastha-asrama* is an *asrama*, a place of spiritual culture. Not a compromise of Krsna conscious principles; an application of them.

The *grhastha-asrama* is important because our Society rests upon it.

I lift my head up and say, "Yes, I'm a *grhastha*, I love my wife and children. I'm a devotee and I can preach."

Radha Priya is a person, a friend, a partner and I love many things about her.

My understanding is not the understanding. My way is not the way.

Time with my family is devotional service; part of my *sadhana*; fun.

London Rathayatra:

Summer sun. The roar of *kirtana*. Nothing else but the Name. Traffic stops. Lord of the universe. People stare.

Saffron/White; colored flags and saris. Babies in pushchairs or back packs. Grandparents. Tribal elders. Prabhupada's family. Pure joy!

Fact or Fiction?

Visoka dasa

Badger, CA

I'm writing this in the hope that others will be spared some of the pain. We all get our fair share of it. The *sastra* relates how the *jiva* enters the forest of enjoyment and hears the harsh sound of crickets—this is compared to the pain of criticism and backbiting. We all suffer from this, because the *maya* potency of Krsna is very expert to see that everybody suffers in this world. But devotees should be getting a minimal amount.

I try to write stories of imagination, with a transcendental purpose in mind. When the story fulfills this purpose, then the use of imagination is justified. But using imagination to speculate about our Godbrothers and God sisters, or to speak ill of others, (especially without evidence) is surely a disease in the mind of the identifier, as is explained by Maharaja Yudhisthira in *Mahabharata*, "Lake of death" chapter, and the "Bull of religion" chapter in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1-3. Gossip or *gramya-katha* is not favorable to anyone, not the speaker or listener, nor the victim of the gossip. Sometimes a form of gossip is a useful tool of communication, like if there is some disgusting news, then a grape-vine serves to relay that information around the village. If such unpalatable news is unfit for publication or public announcements, then a gossip type of network is justified, if the news is factual.

But to concoct stories about others and spread them as facts is . . . need I say? Like when a male devotee heard that everybody thought he was molesting his daughter. The thought never entered his mind—but it sure entered the minds of others. It was inconceivable to him to think of such a thing . . . to violate the dignity of his daughter, to try to get some last ditch sense grab at his age, at the expense of someone he loved. It is more inconceivable that some Godbrother or sister made this up and violated his dignity and his daughter's dignity. (and I heard that the fabrication was perpetuated by a group whose area of expertise is relationships and honesty—and he never got any apologies) This is a *true story!*

He was disgusted but he forgave whoever it was. He can understand, because he's no pure devotee either. Polluted thoughts have entered his mind lots of times, (but nothing as bad as that).

I have other Godbrothers who have been dogged by similar slanders. One Godbrother was driven out of a couple of temples by unfounded gossip. *It really hurts, let me tell you*. So please, let's all stick to the facts of conclusive evidence and not fall prey to fiction that hurts others—lest we invite the pain of reaction back on ourselves, by committing offenses to other devotees. (Is everybody aware of the grave nature of *aparadhas* to devotees? No, it doesn't have to be a pure devotee, there are still reactions for little devotees! Read *Madhurya Kadambini!*)

Also, let not the fear of reactions be our main motive. Let's sincerely think about the pain that gossip brings to others. Better to approach that Prabhu and ask him about it, and talk to him (or her), and not participate in *gramya-katha*, and ask forgiveness from those we've hurt already. Hare Krsna.

What's up with Devotee Support Groups?

Svayamjata dasa

Alachua, FL

Devotee support groups here in Alachua have been together for a year, it's a good time to evaluate what's been happening. First off, these groups were not intended to be scriptural or superficial gathers, which some have become.



Such groups are fine, in and of themselves, but that's not what the men's and women's groups were set up to be. Where these kinds of meetings are taking place, the members have not yet found intimacy or commitment, honor or confidentiality; they have not forged bonding relationships. Because of laziness or lack of intimacy and commitment, some have settled for superficial readings from the scriptures, or completely superficial meetings.

Real scriptural study groups are great for achieving spiritual goals, but they seldom create the nurturing that comes from support groups. One scriptural group formed and failed soon afterward, because there was no intimacy, commitment, respect—or confidentiality. If a group's interaction is superficial then it will fall apart, for any number of reasons: tardiness, lack of attendance, or a lack of bonding that leads members to avoid calling other members when an absence does occur. Why can't we call our fellow members and tell them we can't come? Embarrassment. Housework. Entertainment. Even worse are the excuses to *one's self*: "I don't want to relate to anyone tonight." Or, "I don't know how."

Many of us come from dysfunctional families, where living a lie and covering the truth are rules or roles. Whether it's from abuse, neglect, abandonment or enmeshment, dysfunctional family systems perpetuate shame and rage, as well as lack of boundaries, intimacy or identity. We have a society of people who don't know how to relate to one another. Only a chain of command (militaristic-style), or just interacting on a superficial level! Such groups go on for a short period of time, or they train new recruits into old dysfunctional habits. Ongoing victimization!

When is this all going to stop? It is only going to stop when each member makes a decision to be true to *one's self*. To be a functional human being on this planet is not a guarantee when you are born. It is like all other activities of the material world—it has to be learned. Learned then, hopefully, taught by example!

#### Guru and Father Vijeta dasa Canada

Could there possibly be any similarities? You be the judge. The following realizations came to me this morning during the brahma mahurta hours. I'm usually chanting my rounds but I felt that I had better write this down while its still quiet in the house. I'll take the kids to the local marine park to play, and Arya and I can go for a *japa* walk through the forest along the beach.

I am now in my fourteenth year as a father, so I can only speak from that experience. However, having been fortunate enough to receive my *japa* beads, *brahmana* thread, Gayatri *mantra* and spiritual vows directly from the gentle hand and 'the saffron dust particle' covered lips of the pure devotee, our beloved Gurudeva, Srila Prabhupada, I feel that we have a fairly good idea what some of the qualities of a bona fide *guru* are. If there is any doubt in my mind, we can very easily turn to the wealth of literature and recordings that His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada left for all to share.

The new born child is so totally helpless, completely surrendered and dependent on the parent(s). The child has complete trust in the parent, "this person is only interested in my well being". The parent, on the other hand, is enamored by the child's complete innocence and total dependency, never considering for a moment to exploit this fragile vulnerability, but only eager to nurture, educate and guide this totally dependent living entity. To share their life experiences and values in the hopes that "this child will have more than me, be better than me, fly higher and go farther than me, I will try to give him all those things I never had, to make his life more successful than mine, I want to help him avoid making all the mistakes that I made, He will have a better life than me, I will even die for him."

Similarly, when we first become new *bhaktas* it is a position of absolute surrender. We are completely dependent on our new father, the guru, the spiritual master, and his kind words and actions. He is now our

only shining light in this dark and confusing world, and it feels very comfortable to sit in his lap of instructions, and feel the warmth of his compassionate and caring nature. Let me follow what he has to say, he has dedicated his life so that I can have access to a better life, a real life, a life dedicated to the pursuit of perfection in this material world, to become a servant of the servant of the servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead!

As the child slowly grows up and reaches the 'pauganda' years, he can become very naughty. A whole new set of parenting skills must now be employed, and in many cases they must be acquired from those who have gone before us, or learned the hard way. . . . in the school of hard knocks.

The father must be firm enough to impress upon the child the seriousness of a specific action, but at the same time, doing so in a way that shows love and concern, not simply an order for obedience. The intelligent father will try to develop these skills along with his wife, through the process of 'descending knowledge' from those who have been there before and have emerged with a lasting bond between parent and dependent child. The problem with the school of hard knocks method is that it leaves much to much room for error and misunderstanding, resulting in a weak or even non-existent relationship in the future.

The disciples will also reach a level of growth, where their intelligence has developed beyond 'unquestionable surrender', and they are now ready for serious and detailed answers to the more complex questions of their spiritual growth. At this time they should experience the burning desire to know more, to develop stronger relationships with fellow disciples, but more importantly to cultivate their eternal relationship with their *sampradaya* Acarya! That quest should bring the sincere student disciple to the dust of the lotus feet of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada. The fountainhead of all transcendental knowledge, eternal Guru and spiritual guide for all seekers of real truth. If the *diksha-guru* chooses to 'relay' knowledge from the bona fide sources of those who have gone before us, the authorized *parampara* system, then

his service to the disciple is perfect. If on the other hand he chooses to experiment with the school of hard knocks, or relay teachings from unauthorized or questionable sources, then he is committing the greatest disservice to the disciple. By connecting the student disciple to the bona fide *parampara*, the *guru* and disciple will experience an unshakable bond that will increase more and more. On the other hand, if the *guru* chooses the other path, then no lasting bond will develop, and indeed the relationship could disintegrate very rapidly.

After some time the father begins to realize the true depth of the relationship with the children. It has not been a real give and take situation. The child has always remained dependent, but as he grows older the desire to be more independent becomes stronger and stronger.

The needs of the child become greater and greater, and in many cases the number of children becomes greater and greater, thus compounding the situation. It becomes very apparent to the father that "Gee, I have really become a servant of my kids." Now, to a father who is prepared to accept that responsibility and see the long term advantage of developing a service attitude, a new period of growth can develop. To the father who denies this 'unavoidable fact' there can only be frustration, misery and anger.

So it is, with the *guru*/disciple relationship. If the *guru* thinks that "Oh, now I have some disciples, they can be my servants (so they can make spiritual advancement)", then he will ultimately meet with despair and rejection because this thinking is not in line with the example set by the *acaryadeva* Srila Prabhupada. As many of you may know, one of the first things that Srila Prabhupada would ask of the local management when he arrived at a temple was "What do you want me to do?" He was always eager to engage in what ever program had been arranged for him, to preach, perform *kirtana*, initiations, a marriage or a variety of other services. Of course he performed the ultimate service to his disciples by foregoing health and sleep to translate books and write prolifically. Added to this the selfless austerity of traveling around the world to teach, encourage, nurture and guide his spiritual children. By this example alone all *gurus* must realize

that *they* are servants of their disciples (as well as servants of the *acarya*) and not vice versa. If this fact is realized and acted upon then we will all experience a more healthy and vibrant family of devotees.

Sooner or later, the children grow up and leave the direct protection of the father, they strike out on their own carrying with them their experiences of childhood and youth, and the hopes and aspirations of their caring parents. If their bonding experience has been good, if their development and growth have been consistent, if their relationships with parents and siblings have been nurtured with love and sincerity, then the young adult goes forth with the power of many, and will thus stand a better chance of success in his own sojourn through life's challenges. On the other hand, if the young adult leaves the father prematurely and with anger, frustration and resentment, then he invariably faces life's challenges alone and unprepared with little or no support system. This unfortunate scenario leaves the young adult ill-equipped to traverse successfully the long road to self fulfillment.

At some point in time the disciple may also mature and realize that for further spiritual growth, he must progress beyond the direct protection of the *guru* and execute the purpose of his initiation. He must learn to fly on his own, after all, that is what he has been learning all his life (since spiritual birth). That is to go out into the world and preach, to enlighten others, to show them the path to the house the whole world can live in, to bring them to the dust of the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada. If the disciple has been trained properly with love, sincerity, and attention then he is guaranteed success because he goes forth with the strength, power and purity of the entire *parampara* right back to Lord Sri Krsna. So ultimately he is not leaving the protection of the *guru*, simply executing the orders of the *guru*, and therefore will always remain protected by the *guru* through his instructions. If the disciple has been improperly trained and even misdirected, then there is little chance of his being successful, due to his lack of connection to the true spiritual

storehouse of Srila Prabhupada's causeless mercy. This will result in the eventual drying up of the devotional creeper and trigger an inevitable fall down.

All is not a bed of roses with the relationship of father and children. Sometimes it becomes necessary to chastise the children, but to do so in a controlled mood requires a special talent. One, I'm afraid I have not yet developed. The result of uncontrolled anger can only accelerate the confrontation, possibly setting the stage for a deteriorating relationship, one that may end in violence or even death. To avoid such an unhealthy development it is advised that both parties practice tolerance and patience coupled with a sincere desire to work out their difficulties. This can be achieved more easily with the assistance of the other partner/spouse, or even soliciting outside help from professionals or well wishers.

In a *guru* and disciple relationship this scenario is very rarely seen, that is at least on the physical platform. One exception is the failure of the disciple to follow the order of the Spiritual Master, to usurp his property, and excommunicate fellow god brothers, thus denying them access to the *acarya* and his property. This can be seen as a denial of the existence of the *acarya* and thus the silent proclamation by conscious actions that the *guru* is dead. This can never be factual, as Srila Prabhupada has told us many times, he lives forever in his instructions. As much as we follow sincerely those eternal instructions, Srila Prabhupada will be with us. Srila Prabhupada was always very patient and tolerant with us, and we must be patient and tolerant to recognize that he has not abandoned us, that he is very much alive in the hearts of all of his sincere followers. We must simply become receptive to the realization that he is still available, he is still guiding us.

It is my opinion that just maybe we should adopt an additional prerequisite to being considered for the post of *guru*. This is no insignificant position, this post is the most elevated because it establishes the holder as a bona fide assistant to the *sampradaya acarya* Srila Prabhupada. Lets consider that all future *guru* candidates must have been a successful father. That

is to say he must have helped to successfully raise, nurture, guide and teach his dependent children. A position occupied in total collaboration with a supportive and equally caring female partner. Not just for a few years, but for the entire duration of all the children's dependent years until they have all successfully left home to follow the calling of their new found independence. This would undoubtedly provide the *guru* candidate with many years of training, so they would be better equipped to handle the duties, obligations and responsibilities of such a demanding role. It would help them to be more caring and nurturing, as well as sensitive. Of course the most important lesson of fatherhood would be that the *guru* candidate would learn that it is the disciple's concerns, training and ultimate deliverance from the cycle of birth and death that is of primary importance in the relationship and nothing else. With this in mind the candidate must realize, and more importantly must act, as the assistant to Srila Prabhupada, preaching and initiating on his behalf, as he instructed. In this way always remain the insignificant beggar servant of the present *acarya* of our Madhva Gaudiya *sampradaya* His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada.

As Lord Caitanya instructed: one should not become a teacher, a father, or a *guru* unless he can deliver the dependent from the cycle of birth and death.

Sometimes it becomes necessary to reach out to others, who may be able to help in the quest for confirmation of our eternal relationship with the *sampradaya acarya* Srila Prabhupada. This may arrive in strange and wonderful ways, through fellow god brothers and god sisters, through senior or even junior disciples, and sometimes from the innocent realizations and comments of non initiated devotees or friends. Personally, we have a simple yardstick that we judge the value of advice, preaching, writings and actions intended to elevate ones consciousness. If it increases our attachment to Srila Prabhupada, is non-offensive to fellow Godbrothers and Godsisters, increases our desire to engage in some sort of service especially in devotee association, then we're all for it. On

the other hand if something does not meet these criteria, regardless of where or from whom it came, we pay little or no attention to it. So with these guidelines in mind, we began to read two small booklets by a senior Godbrother Hansaduta dasa. They are called 'Srila Prabhupada, His movement, and You', and 'Excommunicated, Uncommunicated, Incommunicado.' It was very enlivening to see and read actual photocopies of Srila Prabhupada's letters expressing his very clear instructions on his desire for the future growth of his disciplic family. Although I know that Hansaduta Prabhu has had many problems in the past, and has burned a lot of people, however is it not the responsibility of all aspirant Vaisnavas to see only the good qualities in fellow devotees and to practice forgiveness? This forgiveness should be forthcoming of course, only after appropriate rectification, not just a blanket apology. Especially if such deviant behavior has caused great offenses at the lotus feet of the Vaisnavas and our *sampradaya acarya* Srila Prabhupada. But most importantly for us is that his writing has opened our eyes as to everyone's real position with Srila Prabhupada as 'dasaanudasa anudasa,' and not to be aspiring for and posturing as 'so called gurus'. Aspiring to be *guru* is not different than aspiring to be Krsna! After reading his very sobering realizations, and heartfelt apologies, coupled with his deep concern for taking up Srila Prabhupada's factual instructions (i.e., the ritvik representative of the *acarya*), we feel he has presented a viable program of rectification, not only for himself but for any Srila Prabhupada representative who has been in gross illusion about his insignificant position. We also became more enlivened to preach, associate more with devotees, engage in some service and most importantly to help other devotees to realize that Yes, Srila Prabhupada is the pre-eminent *sampradaya acarya*, unequaled by anyone else. In fact only those who consider themselves greatly fortunate beggar servants at the dust of Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet, can actually count themselves as being eligible to receive his mercy. All others are simply fooling themselves and those who follow them.

The father is the head of the family, the children will always remain recipients of the fathers



mercy as long as they follow the fathers instructions. Once the father leaves the family he may appoint senior children to carry on 'on his behalf' and offer protection to the younger children. At no time can the senior children proclaim that 'they have become the father', only a personally ambitious fool would make such a claim, and only a bigger fool would believe him.

Have you ever seen the poster in video store windows, advertising the movie 'Schindler's List'? It is a picture of an adult hand holding a child's hand, superimposed over a typewritten list of names. We have not seen the movie, but are aware that it has something to do with the Jewish holocaust, a nazi authority and imprisoned children. What we don't know is whether the poster depicts the hand of an adult taking the child off to certain death, or whether it depicts the hand of an adult taking the child to safety.

It dawned on me that the *guru*/disciple relationship could be like that! You have a fragile, vulnerable childlike disciple eager and willing to take the guiding hand of an authority, but to where? If the authority *guru* leads the disciple by the hand to the lotus feet of the *sampradaya acarya* Srila Prabhupada, then he has indeed performed the most beneficial service to that person, by connecting him with the engineer of the express train to freedom. If on the other hand the authority *guru* leads the disciple away from the sanctuary and protection of the pure devotee, then it is as if he has lead the devotee child to certain and uncompromising spiritual death!

In closing I would like to mention to all the Matajis that this analogy of father and *guru* is not intended to belittle the unique position of the mother. All the masculine referrals can very easily (and in most cases are more applicable) to the feminine sex. The inherent qualities of selflessness, commitment, dedication, nurturing and caring that are found naturally in mothers, usually must be developed by us fathers. Were it not for the fact that you are somewhat restricted by the temporary occupancy of a female body, these wonderful qualities would make you very

appropriate candidates for the post of *guru*. My wife Arya devi dasi told me she read recently that Srila Prabhupada said a woman can never occupy the position of *guru*, but that she should know, and be proud, that she possesses the unique ability to give birth to, nurture and raise a devotee who may become a *guru*.

Finally, for all you fathers out there, take heart! Work diligently, and with great determination along with your wife, to raise your children in Krsna consciousness. Instill in them all the good qualities you see in Srila Prabhupada and his surrendered servants. Stick it out to the very end, they grow up very fast, give them the mental and spiritual strength to go forward and help Srila Prabhupada deliver all the fallen conditioned souls. They are a part of you, and carry with them your legacy, always be there for them, you are their *guru*

"Help! I've Fallen and Can't Get Up!"

Kamalasana dasa  
Vrndavana, India

I know most of us are easily able to keep the vows and do our *sadhana*. But some people don't and every few years or so I cross paths with someone who is experimenting with psychedelics in their "pursuit of excellence." Everyone had a rationalization. "Well, Krsna says he is the healing herb," "In India the *sadhus* smoke ganja because it helps you be celibate," "Reality is for people who can't handle drugs," "By following the rules you arrive at the point where you must abandon the rules in order to transcend." I had my own brush with that back in 1976.

Since some rare individual may need to go through the same lesson as I, here's what happened for me. Shortly after purchasing *Bhagavad-gita* (1972) I found a bucket full of marijuana in the basement of the company I worked for. I smuggled it out and brought it home. Before I began to use it I read that purport in *Bhagavad-gita* where Srila Prabhupada says: "There are many pseudodevotees of Lord Siva who want to indulge in smoking ganja (marijuana) and similar intoxicating drugs, forgetting that by so imitating the acts of Lord Siva

they are calling death very near."

I never heard that marijuana was harmful but just on the strength of reading that one sentence it was surprisingly easy to throw all that marijuana in the garbage, no struggle, no regrets. Simply because Srila Prabhupada said so. "No intoxication" Bas!

I moved into Sri Sri Radha-Govinda Mandir (430 Henry Street Brooklyn N.Y.C.) a few months later then a few months later I took the vows and did a strict *sadhana* for a few years. But, unfortunately every once-in-a-while I wondered: "Why not use the psychedelic drugs along with this *sadhana*? I had some amazing experiences. My mind unfolded like anything, no care about eating, sleeping, mating, defending, those concerns were atomic size while contemplating the mysteries of universe on drugs. Why is it forbidden to use these substances?"

I doubted the process, blooped and went to Hawaii of course! A place where the "magic mushrooms" are readily available for the taking. After chit-chatting with the locals, I was sufficiently educated about the mushrooms to feel "ready to go," I was "hot to trot," excited by anticipation that "now I am going to really experience something."

Everything was ready, I put the drugs into the body and pretty soon I was "high," trying to read *Bhagavad-gita*, if the words would just keep still so I could read them. With a lot of effort I could scan a sentence but the mind would pick a interesting word and focus on all the different possible meanings of it then go off on a tangent and by the time I realized what was going on and pulled back to the task of understanding the sentence, I lost the original train of thought, so, reading was not possible. Chanting was as futile but for different reasons. The mind was constantly shifting and moving about in abstract ways. I was in a very "high" state but I knew that: "This is not Krsna consciousness," my self was not awakened on the transcendental platform. So, a few tries were unsuccessful, of course, you go up you come down, it seemed incredibly high but there was no mind control, what to speak of any eternal transcendent awakening.

A few times a month I used to hitch-hike to

the main library in Lihve. I walked in, went to the philosophy category, plopped down onto the floor, blindly reached over and pulled out any book, cracked it open and began reading. The first words I saw were the beginning of a chapter called "The Drug Dilemma." After reading about 8 pages I was cured. Right there is the why of no intoxication. My experimentation was successfully concluded. I refocused more firmly than ever on the true path of evolution into Krsna consciousness.

"Such experiences with these drugs hinder progress toward God consciousness. For while it is true that they attune you to God, they attune you as to the relationship you had with God before you became fully identified in matter. This world is not a place that should be escaped. The material world is an opportunity of transformation. The "self" is already transcendental, you disinfect the consciousness of the three modes of material nature by performing acts of sacrifice, not by blasting a hole in your etheric body allowing consciousness to "leak out" onto the astral plane. With the drug they are having an experience with God, but it is not that which will help them to function more effectively toward spiritual realization. Hence, in the drug experience we find a devolutionary influence, a anti-evolutionary influence. This is to indicate that the state of the individuals body/mind relationship will be degraded or set back upon the path by the use of psychedelic drugs. The use of all these (marijuana, alcohol, LSD) are a tendency of the individual to escape responsibility.

"In the search for God, in a realistic approach, there is no place for these drugs; the chemical stimulation of inadvertent activity in the glands of the body will not evolve the soul. No putting of chemicals into the body can possible bring about spiritualization the more. Those who take to the use of drugs and rationalize this upon the basis of spiritual progress, deceive only themselves. They can not find any knowledge whatever that will lead them beyond matter. Yes, the drug experience can lead to an awareness of being in prison, but it cannot give the key to unlock it, to move out of it. You are quite capable intellectually of knowing that you are in a prison and that there is something outside of it, without

the drug experience."

So this is the advice of what to do if you did use drugs. Cleanse the body with sauna baths, or exercise where there is considerable sweating. Wholesome association, good food, plenty of vitamin C, some vitamin E is good to overcome such harm and the lethargy, the general sense of lack of responsibility that oft arises in the minds of those who have used drugs. There is a mention that dark green leafy vegetables are the most valuable food to use.

Basically the drug experience can not help you evolve in to Krsna consciousness, the drug experience is a hindrance, a set back. So if you want off the samsara do no dissolve your subtle body with psychedelic drugs. Some quotes, Srila Prabhupada: "This marijuana, LSD, it will spoil everything." Maktamanda Swami (a Shivate): "If drugs could help your spiritual life, I would be giving them out to you." Also, in "Tales of Power" Don Juan told Carlos that the drugs he used severely damaged the physical body, and that drugs are not necessary for the mystic experience.

Oh, my God! what to speak of mescaline, peyote, psilocybin, marijuana, DMT, purple microdot, windowpane, Mr. Natural, orange sunshine, simply a thought of near beer is enough to destroy your *sadhana*. So be careful the road to hell is a 8 lane super highway, but the path into Krsna consciousness is a narrow pathway (too narrow to walk on).

### Planting the Seed

We are writing to outline events we are planning as part of Srila Prabhupada's centennial year. In 1996, we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Srila Prabhupada's birth and the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of ISKCON. We feel it is only fitting to give tribute to Srila Prabhupada's warriorlike preaching spirit by conquering New York, the birthplace of ISKCON, for Krsna. Our strategy is cultural conquest.

1. Krsna rock concert in Central Park

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2. Book exhibit in NY Public Library
3. Debate w/ scientists on origins of life
4. Art exhibition of Krsna paintings
5. Concert of traditional Indian dance and drama
6. Temporary temple in Battery Park with dioramas, *nagar kirtana* and *prasada* distribution.
7. Film on Prabhupada at a Manhattan theater
8. Public mural of Prabhupada's preaching
9. Grand reunion for devotees and friends
10. Prabhupada memorial in Tompkins Square Park

The events will be held in prominent New York venues such as Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and the New York Public Library. Our intention is to attract many people to Krsna consciousness through cultural programs, and to engage many devotees in the realization of these goals. We're excited by the response thus far. In just one month more than 20 devotees have pledged commitment of some sort to these projects. We are still looking for advisors and consultants to help us design each event. Please contact Dayananda dasa (301) 770-4010 or Nandimukhi devi dasi (718) 784-2459.

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### In Response to Articles in Previous Issues

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"Look at BTG"  
Devi dasi

Manhattan Beach, CA

You complain that BTG should be "turbocharged," a "superweapon for destroying ignorance," a "preaching publication," rather than "speaking to our concerns, our interests, our questions." However, good preaching is always an interaction between people rather than a one-way deposit of information. It is just as important to understand your audience, as it is to know your

philosophy.

I believe that Jayadvaita Maharaja's statement was made with this strategy in mind. Good teachers know how to communicate complex ideas so they can be easily understood. Comprehension failures often result from the language used to express an idea, rather than from the difficulty of the idea itself. In order to communicate effectively, we need to consider many things: What is the purpose of the communication? What are the listener's characteristics: age, culture, knowledge, social status? And how much does the listener know or want to know about the topic? The answers to these questions should shape the nature of the communication, although most people never consciously consider them.

### GENERAL RULES FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION

(Taken from Matlin's book, *Cognition*)

Rule 1: Tell listeners what you believe they want to know. Consider how you would answer a simple question like, "Where do you live?" If I met you in Europe, you would probably say, "in the United States." On a college campus, you might respond, "in the dorms." The answer would depend on the context of the question, and what you thought I wanted to know. The level of information you choose to convey depends on the purpose of the communication.

Rule 2: Vary the style of your communication, depending on the knowledge, culture, age, and status of the listeners. Beliefs, knowledge, and expectations of the intended audience should determine which words are used, and how much detail goes into a communication. The difficulty does not reside in the information, but in the listener-information interaction.

Rule 3: Tell the truth. When you speak, it is assumed that the information conveyed is truthful. This is imperative for meaningful communication. In general, the process breaks down when the listener suspects the speaker is violating this rule.

We can take a hint, here, about the viability of misrepresenting ourselves in any sphere of activity. Although we can say we are lying for Krsna, we may also lose credibility in our over-

all preaching effort!

Rule 4: Use straightforward, simple language. It is a far more difficult task to express complex thoughts in simple language than to express simple thoughts in complex language.

Rule 5: Give listeners a balance between new and known information. Too much new information will be hard to follow; while too much known information will be boring. The ratio of new-to-known information should be determined by the difficulty of the communication.

The educational process, if successful, should foster the transformation of new information into the listeners' system of known information. In other words, the more we can relate Vaisnavism to their already-known ideas, "concerns, interests, and questions," the greater the chances of convincing them about the Absolute Truth. Every good salesperson knows that getting people into a mode of agreement is the best way to close a deal!

### Admitting Our Own Misconceptions Dasaratha-suta dasa Atlanta, GA

When the remarkable selection of feedback on my unfortunate and trashy satire called "Near Beer is Beer" was printed in *Priti-laksanam* #10, the first reaction was to wonder why I had even written it. With more important aspects of devotional life to focus on, why spend time venting my old *brahmachari* feelings for such a small reason like the choices devotees make over what or what not to put on their altars and into their stomachs. We have all heard something from the spiritual master about how to cook, offer, and honor *prasadam* preparations that are pleasing to Lord Krsna, we have attended more than one class on the revealed scriptures, and now everyone has to decide for themselves what is offerable to the Lord or not.

It is truly none of my business what others eat. Now it's clearer that Krsna has mercifully arranged my public embarrassment for the good of other devotees as well as for my own development in loving Krsna conscious health. The ideas I expressed in the harsh article were throwbacks to a time when I was emulating the leaders of the Movement, especially the "fired-up *sannyasis*" in



whose care I was trained-up. And the elitist attitude of such "heavy" training demanded immediate, explosive, and immature "blasting" of things, especially those appearing of sense-gratificatory nature, that didn't fit in with the rigid "Krsna conscious standard" that was being held at the time. We were taught that we "fit in" and were indeed praised if we maintained a boldly self-righteous and condescending attitude toward anything that (we were told) was the slightest deviation. This may be good, to a degree, for the initial training of *brahmacaris*, but now we may look more closely to see that if such attitudes are programmed as a "normal" emotional response to the world around us, then in the long run it amounts to blatant and damaging dysfunctional behavior patterns.

It is my sincere hope that my personal humiliation of seeing the old hung-up *brahmacari* mirrored publicly in this way will assist some other eternal devotional family members to recognize and face up to their own questionable dysfunctional programming and responses, having the courage to reassess such values.

In *Priti-laksanam* #10 we find a report from the devotee in U.K. about several visits to the local temple in which "we saw and heard good, positive things along with unacceptable, misleading and damaging stuff masquerading as Krsna consciousness (not unlike the 'Near Beer is Beer' letter which appeared in your last issue #9)." This is horrifying news, indicating that the same old dinosaur attitudes characteristic of immature men (who propagated the ideas that damaged my own emotional development) are still prevalent in our devotional society today. May we honestly bring all these things out into the brilliant light of Guru and Krsna, striving to constantly purify our own motives and practice serving each other with love, humility and tolerance—which is what we really want to do. Hare Krsna!

Letter received by Dasaratha-suta dasa in response to "Near Beer is Beer" 2/23/94:

"I read your article in the *Priti-laksanam* about Near Beer and so on, you really KO'd

'em. Devotees should really be more careful what they eat and drink and see with great care if what they are offering to Krsna is something that He will accept. Radharani is always preparing with the greatest care thinking of Krsna's pleasure when He will taste Her cooking. Her ingredients are all pure and simple and we are Her assistants. Whenever and wherever I cook I am always thinking this is Radhika's kitchen and I am Her assistant. To use things like vinegar, onions or garlic is not good. I am sorry to hear devotees are using these even if they are only an ingredient in something. I never want to hear of anyone using Near Beer or decaf coffee—it's a sin. If they really want to surrender then they should study Prabhupada's diet and 'walk in the footsteps.' "

N.L., Miami

Dawn  
Visoka dasa  
Badger, CA

*This chapter is a "book" written around the beginning of the 21st century, and is a "book within a book" subplot of a much bigger main plot, which takes place many thousands of years later. The "book" is being read aloud at a world council of Brahmins meeting in Jaipur, India.*

My name is Bhimasena, and I am writing this book for the sake of future generations, so they may know the beginnings of the new world here on our isle of Sierra, and on the isles of what used to be a large mass of land, once known as North Amerika. This is the story of my family and my friends and spiritual brothers and sisters, of how we struggled to build a new life from the ruins of the great cataclysm, and how we reached out to the other isles and the world beyond, and how the Coalition conquered the entire globe.

Times were dark in Kali-yuga, in late twentieth century North Amerika. The country plunged into a pit of despair—as youth became black hearted beasts with no feeling or compassion. Driven by lust and anger, these animals walked on two legs and roamed the streets in fancy cars and murdered fellow beings without remorse. The social fabric

stretched and tore into chaos as the Amerikan dream turned to ghastly nightmare. Nobeastly or immoral act was spared—as young, old and unborn fell to the killing knife and bullet. As for the animals, Kali proved to be a living hell of a short miserable life meant for a tingling taste sensation. The karmic volcano erupted in great violence and mother earth had surely had her fill. All that screamed of decency and sanity within the universe cried out, "Enough, enough! End this madness, stop this abomination now!"

Time of destruction was nigh at hand, and mass violence appeared as a cure for the hate in men's hearts. Then the signs appeared in the sky and hearts of all good men and women. The gentle animals grew restless and dogs and wild coyotes and wolves bayed and howled senselessly day and night. A collective psychic thing happened, like how great flocks of birds will suddenly know when and where to fly for great distances and rendezvous for mating season, so in a similar fashion, numbers of good men and women and children suddenly flocked to the foothills and mountains just prior to that fateful day. And my elders were equally psychic, and knew that it would be so, and were ready for the coming of pious souls, and had long prepared for self sufficiency of a community, and had learned the ways of the land and secrets of nature and the ways of life in harmony with the land and animals. And so we were ready for the event that so many gifted of far vision had seen beforehand.

Simultaneously with the coming of the pious, there were those in the mountains with wickedness in their hearts, and they had somehow found some pressing business down in the valley on that day. As they went down the mountain, they were passed by the good people going up the mountain. The good folk waved, but the evil ones were not friendly, as they were hurrying toward a watery fate.

Then it happened. First was seen dark clouds and lighting in the sky as a sign and then great quakes came as a cosmic hammer that pounded the earth relentlessly, and hills rolled and shook with colossal force and mas-

sive fires and billowing black columns of smoke rose in all directions. The lands crumbled and broke away and sunk and oceans swelled and crashed up to the foothills, and all else was engulfed with water. The Pacific had come up to our abode and had covered all we had known before, all that lay beyond the base of our hills. The sky blackened and dark clouds and lightning filled the sky with rainless thunder and flashing for days, and then a solid rain fell for a week and washed the soot out of the sky. When all cleared away, we went down to the ocean front and saw huge waves crashing along the base of the foothills and the great sea stretched out before us, as far as we could see. I looked down to the beach and bodies were seen floating and tossed by the waves, and I felt pity in my heart.

My mother saw my sympathy and said that it was a way for the earth to cleanse herself. The earth had been too long defiled from the karma of violence and the filth that putrefied her surface.

"A time of reckoning has come," she said sagely, as she held me close. "Karma has come to bear . . . a vengeance has come to reap sweet justice."

That day was so heavy . . . especially for us kids, (and I was just a boy at the time). It is not every day when this kind of stuff happens, like so many people wiped off the map, and so many animals suddenly snuffed out . . . but they probably died better, as they were earmarked for a cruel death anyway. The heavy reality just shook us. It was hard for us kids to understand that some people we knew before, were dead. On the other hand, we all felt such inner joy that Kali-yuga had undergone a transformation with all its hardware, like missiles and ugra-karma factories and slaughterhouses and war machines . . . all of it *just flushed down the toilet* . . . so to speak. We were really smiling about that. Several islands were left, and all Kali-yuga machinery wiped out, and we felt great. All gone and good riddens . . . all in one stroke . . . really far out.

It felt not so bad, when it eventually became known to us that most of the pious souls were guided by inspiration to move to the regions of the isles in time, before the cataclysm hit, and likewise, many of those with evil hearts were

inspired to leave. It seemed that a kind of cosmic scales weighted and balanced out everything in the end.

So we sent messenger birds out to search for other areas of survival...

For copies of the entire story contact Visoka in Badger at the address given in the Ads section "Novel Series, Fiction."

#### Return To New Remuna

Mathuresa dasa

Alachua, FL

In the morning around eight-thirty, after finishing his *japa* in the motel room, Narada sat on the edge of the bed and phoned the temple. After ten rings he hung up, but thought better of it and dialed again. He wanted to see if Srinatha was there and to find out if they were observing Ekadasi today. New York temple was observing, he knew, but that was a few hundred miles away. Twenty rings and no answer. He'd visit anyway and catch the noon *arati*. While packing his suitcase he dialed once more and let it ring for five full minutes, balancing the receiver on his shoulder.

At the check-out desk the motel manager tore a printout of Narada's bill off the computer and gave it a once-over.

"Darn," she said. "Computer's on the blink again. This shows the phone rang almost one hundred times on a series of calls you made to Charleston."

"One hundred, really?" said Narada, caught off-guard by this computer surveillance and glad the manager didn't know about temple phones.

"That's all right," she assured Narada. "We've had trouble with this software before."

Narada took route 95 south and arrived at the front gate of the farm in his rented car late that morning. The lilac bushes he and Bhakta Rob had planted as six-inch seedlings had formed tall hedges on either side of the driveway. They were leafless now in late fall. In the fields long rows of marigolds stood withered brown and dripping with the morning drizzle. Looked like the gardeners could have done more weeding last summer, and whoever

was in charge of mowing the grass must have missed the field borders.

Fifty yards up the driveway, standing over six feet tall beside the steps to the wood shop, Narada saw the first sign of life—a brand new, illuminated, red and white Pepsi vending machine. Narada had nothing against Pepsi. He drank the caffeine-free variety occasionally. But was nothing sacred? he joked to himself. Beside the Pepsi machine stood a garbage can with a sign that said "Recycle cans here." The wood shop itself, once a bustling part of New Remuna, was padlocked and looked unused, with grass growing between the steps.

These eight acres of farmland half an hour west of Charleston had been a project of the Charleston temple in the late seventies. Karuna Moya prabhu, the temple president, had purchased the place to provide the devotees with a retreat from the more hectic pace and cramped quarters at the city temple. For several years the devotees had also run a flower business here, supplying east coast temples with marigolds for Deity garlands. Narada remembered long hot summers spent in the gardens with Bhakta Rob and others, weeding and watering.

Since then the city temple had closed, although a *grhastha* couple still held a Sunday feast at their apartment. Narada went to Europe in '79, then to Africa and Indonesia. He returned to the States in '86, married and looking for work. He sold paintings for a while with the Cleveland temple but decided he needed his own business. With paintings your salary was almost a concession, as if you were stealing from the temple, which some devotees said you were. Narada and his wife Chandra felt too restricted. With a new baby arriving every couple years, and with the in-laws an ever-increasing presence, they wanted a house of their own.

That had led Narada to brush up on his programming skills and join a software company. At present he serviced computers and software in the St. Louis area and had started to receive royalties from two software manuals on which he and Chandra had collabo-

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—Sailodgata dasi Mesquite, TX

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rated. This visit to Charleston was a detour on a business flight to New York to secure a shipment of IBM clones.

As Narada turned left between the barn and pasture he saw Godas, New Remuna's lone ox, standing with his head against the fence and the old familiar expression on his face—doleful beggar's eyes peering through the rails. Godas was a leftover from a former ISKCON farm community in Ohio. His name had been Nandi, after Lord Siva's bull, but one of the *brāhmacaris*, noting Nandi's constant state of agitation (due to loneliness, some said) and his indiscriminate appetite, had labeled him Godas, and the name had stuck.

Narada pulled close to the fence and rolled down the window. "Hey Godas! How ya doing, old pal? *Hari bol*. Been controlling your senses?" It was the first chance Narada had had to talk to anyone for hours, and the first time he had greeted anyone outside his family with a "*Hari bol*" for days. Godas stuck his head over the fence and let Narada scratch between his ears.

"OK, old boy, gotta go see Gaura-Nitai. Here, take this." Godas's eyes widened as he licked half a crumbled Hersey bar from Narada's outstretched palm.

Rounding the tool shed Narada got his first glimpse of the temple, once a farm house. He was disappointed with what he saw. Apparently no one had painted the place since the *sankirtana* devotees did the job on that weekend back in '78. There were several broken window panes covered with cardboard, and the front porch looked like it was caving in. A heavy-duty orange extension cord ran loosely from a third floor window down to a basement door. A car without wheels sat on blocks in the backyard, where a sari and a white *dhori* hung drenched and windblown on the split rail fence. Two old bikes and an assortment of plastic toys lay scattered around the front yard. Of course, Narada thought, the yard here didn't look much different from his own front yard in St. Louis. But that was the point.

He kicked off his shoes on the porch and stepped into the lobby. Temples had a pure,

transcendental fragrance to them, although he noticed the scent of Pine Sol and stale *prasadam* mixed with the the aroma of incense. Damn, he was a fault-finder. He'd planned this stop at New Remuna, after a twelve-year absence, as a transcendental interlude to his business trip, and he was not going to let his critical side spoil it.

In one corner of the lobby two young men, one with a shaven head, the other with long hair and a moustache, sat reading. They didn't notice him, it seemed. Narada too felt shy. He looked at his watch and perused the bulletin board. It was eleven forty-five. Fifteen minutes to *arati*. He fumbled with keys and change in his trousers pockets, hung up his denim jacket, ran his fingers through his curly black hair, and tucked in his shirt neatly around his paunch.

"*Hari bol*, Prabhu!" said a woman's voice.

Narada looked up and saw Mother Sarmistha descending the stairs to the lobby. She was wearing a blue, flowered sari, holding it at her neck to keep her head covered. In her right hand she had a small round brightly polished silver tray on which she held a fresh yellow rose. The rose and the tray were covered with drops of water.

"*Hari bol*," said Narada. "Glories to Prabhupada."

"Visiting?" she asked, taking a couple steps toward the temple room door.

"Yeah, thought I'd drop by to see how things were," said Narada. "How's Ajamidha doing?"

"He's still in Cleveland. Runs a gallery in the Westside Mall. Sends Bhadra to public school . . . And Chandra?"

"She's at home with the kids. Five kids now."

"Five? Oh, my."

After a minute or two Sarmistha left to prepare for *arati*. Narada remembered how she and Chandra hadn't hit it off in Cleveland. They had been more or less tolerant with each other most of the time, but at home Chandra complained that Sarmistha was overbearing with her position as head *pujari* and senior devotee. 'Sarmistha-loka' is what Chandra had called the Cleveland temple. Chandra, still

Bhaktin Cindy at the time, was dedicated to ISKCON but not inclined to a silent role in temple life. She had a master's degree in business, had run a small travel agency, and was steadily chanting her rounds and reading the books. Why, Cindy asked herself (and Narada), should she take so much guff from Sarmistha?

"Just try to be cordial and avoid her," Narada had pleaded. "She's taking such good care of the Deities."

Narada asked the two young men in the lobby about Srinatha. Srinatha had moved to L.A., they said, somewhere near the Watseka Avenue temple. They didn't have his address, but his wife of less than a year, a British devotee, was still here at New Remuna. She was down at the K-mart today at a *prasadam* table, raising money for For Life and for a used car she had her eye on.

Hearing the conchshell blow, Narada and the two young men went to attend the noon *arati*, joining two girls who had already begun a *kirtana*. One, dark-haired with enormous silver earrings, was sitting on the floor beating expertly on a fiberglass *mrdanga*. The other, a short, skinny girl with red hair and glasses, was playing the *kartalas*, dancing, and leading the Srila Prabhupada *pranati* prayers. Her high, clear voice filled the temple room. Narada and the others followed, but couldn't match her vigor or volume.

Narada couldn't remember hearing a woman lead *kirtana* since he first joined in the early seventies in Abbotville, where Chidananda, the president, had evenly divided the *arati* and *hari-nama kirtanas* between men and women. This red-haired girl was about the same age Narada had been when he joined. Her enthusiasm brought a grin to his face and made him chant louder, encouraging the other two men. He felt blissful and carefree. The anxiety and uncertainty of his visit was gone, the delapidated condition of the building forgotten or at least reduced in its significance. Besides, he thought, if he and so many other devotees hadn't left, maybe the place wouldn't be so neglected. Presently, whatever donations he could man-

age went to the St. Louis temple.

The New Remuna temple room, he noted, was spotless, and the altar was glowing it was so clean. He recognized Mother Sarmistha's handiwork in the sparkling Deity clothing and ornaments. Gaura-Nitai were wearing green silk *dhotis* and vests bedecked with sequins and patterns embroidered with silver thread. Their garlands were sparse but colorful and their hair carefully combed and curled.

Here in the temple room was the pure core of devotion, surrounded though it may have been by unkempt buildings and grounds. Maybe it was like Srila Prabhupada said about Vrndavana—that its outward appearance as a dirty Indian village was a curtain of Maya to keep *karmis* and Mayavadis away. Had Prabhupada actually said that? And was it relevant here? Feeling he was speculating, Narada shook it off and tuned back to the *kirtana*.

The dark-haired *bhaktin* with the *mrdanga* led the Nrsimha prayers until the curtains closed. Narada paid obeisances and went back to the lobby. He was reaching for his coat when the red-haired girl appeared, bright-eyed, with a stack of books in her hands and BTC's under her arm.

Narada choked. He could recognize a book distributor anywhere, what to speak of here, and he could recognize that at the present moment he was in a book distributor's sights. He thought of introducing himself first and explaining that he already had all the books, that he subscribed to BTC, and that he'd been a devotee since he was her age, but couldn't get himself to do it.

"Hare Krsna! I'm Bhaktin Sharon," she said.

"I'm Nathan Burroughs," said Narada, surprised at himself for using his *karmi* name.

"Have you been to a temple before?"

"Long time ago," said Narada, turning slightly red.

"Well, welcome. Will you stay for lunch? We eat food that's been offered with love and devotion to the Deities you saw on the altar. They're not idols, you know, but real forms . . ."

"Oh I wouldn't think They were idols," said Narada. "Sure, I could stay for lunch."

"Good." She hesitated, looking for a way to present the books and turning a little red herself.

Hoping for assistance, Narada glanced over at the two young men, who were seated again reading *Gitas*, but couldn't catch their eyes. "So. Did you print those books yourselves?" he asked.

"Not exactly ourselves," she said with relief. "They're printed in L.A. by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust."

She went on to tell Narada how Srila Prabhupada had sailed to America in 1965 with a trunk full of *Bhagavatams* and started a storefront temple in New York City. Narada at first felt irritated but soon began to relish the preaching and appreciate how Krsna had set him up for it. Narada learned that he wasn't this body, but pure spirit soul, that the soul is part and parcel of Krsna, that the *yuga-dharma* is to chant the holy names, and that Madonna, inspired by Boy George, had considered joining a temple. This last bit of information was new to Narada, who feigned interest. When Sharon said Jagannatha Puri was in Bengal he started to correct her, but decided against it.

Bhaktin Sharon packed her entire discourse into the four or five minutes before *prasadam* arrived from the kitchen. Devotees put several steaming pots on a table in the lobby alongside a tray of *maha prasadam*. Since Bhaktin Sharon hadn't gotten around to actually selling the books, which were now in Narada's hands, he asked, "Are these books for sale?"

"Yes," she said. "We just request a donation."

Narada gave her a twenty dollar bill for a small *Gita*, a BTG, a vegetarian cookbook featuring pasta dishes, and a typewritten, photocopied pamphlet entitled "ISKCON Salutes The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King" written by a Saci Priya dasa. One of the young men had meanwhile prepared a paper plate of *maha* which he presented to Narada with the extreme reverence Narada too had once held for a plate of the Deity offering.

Not that he was irreverent now, but his digestion wasn't as good. Holding the ghee-soaked plate of stone cold *maha*, including eggplant *pakor*s and an eggplant-chickpea

*sabji*, he longingly eyed the steaming pots of rice and *dal*. But the cat still had his tongue and he dutifully honored the *maha* while talking with the two young men, one of whom turned out to be a student at the University of North Carolina, the other a disciple of Brghu Maharaja who had almost singlehandedly planted and cultivated New Remuna's marigold fields the previous summer. Narada learned that Srinatha had left New Remuna after a fight with his wife and that several other devotees were away at a GBC meeting in Dallas.

While they were talking, another young man came slowly down the stairs to the lobby—from the men's *asrama* on the third floor, Narada figured. The newcomer was dressed in nothing but a *brahmana's* thread, a white v-necked undershirt, and a *gamcha*. He looked pale and gaunt. Maybe he had just returned from a rough trip to India. He peered into the pots, poked around on the *maha* tray, and finding nothing to his liking, poured himself a glass of *maha* water and went slowly back upstairs. No one seemed to notice him, or to notice him as something unusual anyway, so Narada tried to keep his own jaw from dropping.

After lunch Narada washed his hands and mouth in the porter closet in the front hall. He was leaving the closet, wiping his hands on his trousers and looking for his coat, when Bhaktin Sharon appeared again, without books this time, but with that same fired-up expression, and holding a strand of *tulasi* neck beads. Narada still wore neck beads, though only a single strand so that they didn't show over his collar. He prepared to buy another set.

Bhaktin Sharon had completed the sale and was preaching to Narada about the efficacy of *kanthi-mala* in warding off the Yamadutas when Mother Sarmistha walked through the doors from the temple room carrying the *arati* tray.

"Sharon, can I talk to you for a second?" Sarmistha whispered, passing by.

"Sure," said Sharon. "Nice talking with you, Nathan."

"Thanks for everything," said Narada. "Good to see you again, Mother Sarmistha," he said with a wave, and went to get his coat.

Mother Sarmistha walked over to the stairs

and stood on the first step, *arati* tray in hand, conferring quietly with Bhaktin Sharon. Around the corner at the coat rack, Narada could hear bits of their conversation. Sharon was saying something about selling a *Gita* and a cookbook while Sarmistha made approving sounds.

"But did you know he used to be a devotee?" Sarmistha whispered.

"Really?"

"Oh yeah. For a long time."

"Wow."

Narada stood by the coatrack, wincing. It wasn't the "used to be a devotee" bit that bothered him. He didn't know whether to laugh or blush at that. It was true anyway, more or less. Even he and Chandra, though they still chanted and worshiped Deities at home, sometimes talked about the time they spent living in temples as the time they "used to be devotees."

It bothered him more that he might have embarrassed the new Bhaktin, what to speak of making a fool of himself. Why hadn't he introduced himself from the start? Was he so used to being "Nathan" with his business associates that he couldn't be "Narada" with devotees? Or was this all just an accident?

Narada waited for a few minutes until the lobby emptied, then stepped out onto the front porch to get his shoes. Two enormous cats were eating leftover *prasadam* from a soggy paper plate on the front steps. Bhaktin Sharon was outside, book bag on her shoulder, climbing into a van with the dark-haired bhaktin. She still seemed blissful, yelling out "Hare Krsna!" to him as she closed the van door.

Narada got into his own car and headed out the driveway and back to route 95. Thinking over his visit, he laughed and slapped the steering wheel. He'd have to drop by again to see the devotees he'd missed this time. Maybe he could make it a family outing, with Chandra and the kids, for Gaura Purnima next spring. Chandra had expressed a desire to visit the temples where they had served before moving to St. Louis. She might also enjoy seeing New Remuna, his old haunt, for the first time.

## PERSONALS

Please send \$4.00 per ad to run in 4 issues. Only ads seeking marriage partnerships will be considered for publication; please word your ad carefully to show intent for marriage. All new ads will have the first few words in bold; ads run previously will not.

I want to go back home in this lifetime, but need help. Looking for a supportive peer relationship with a Vaisnava man who is fun, realistic and mature, sociable, honest, sensitive, can play the mrdanga, and is open to the many possibilities of fulfilling Lord Caitanya's message in the West. I'm in a female body that is forty, like computers and am goofy. I love Deity worship, sweet kirtanas and some of the jokes on COM. Srila Prabhupada disciple initiated in 1971. Currently learning Bengali and will be applying to graduate school. Am dedicated to discovering the potential avenues available to me to help Prabhupada spread His guru's message and to make Him smile. Looking forward to a fulfilling Vaisnava relationship that supports our abilities and dreams and Prabhupada's goals. All letters will be responded to in a timely manner. Please enclose picture of your altar or favorite Deities. Your servant, Satya devi dasi. P.O. Box 1069, Berkeley, CA 94701. (16)

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As I am looking for a wife, I would like to correspond with a female devotee (20's, 30's) looking for a husband. I'm in my early 30's, initiated, have a graduate degree, and am now engaged in a teaching occupation that involves preaching work. Please send a letter introducing yourself. Traits that appeal to me are: a peaceful nature, minimal mental "baggage," optimistic attitude, a mood of appreciation, ability to laugh at yourself (and others), and firm sadhana. A recent photo would be nice. Hare Krsna. Send c/o my friend: Brian Weber, 14 S. Beaumont, Catonsville, Maryland 21228, U.S.A. (13)

• • •

28 year old male, Krsna devotee, of Indian origin and up bringing. I am seeking my Beloved's grace to find me a suitable wife. I am a software engineer, working in Tampa, with interests in sports, music, cooking and farming. In the long run I am desirous of living on a farm and already planning for it. I am seeking a wife, between the age of 22 and 30, who is sweet, intuitive, caring and devoted to my Lord Murari and His devotees. I will respond to all inquiries. Please send letter, picture(s), and copy of horoscope (if available) to Vinay



Soni, 1070, Robmar Road, Dunedin, FL 34698. (15)

Former gurukula student, now a 19 year old student at Black Hills State University. I am the son of a sannyasi, however after nine years surrounded by the materialism and ignorance of the mainstream American society my journey for knowledge brought me back to the absolute truth of the *Bhagavad-gita*. I am an avid reader and seeker of truth. My interests include philosophy, physics, art and all creative and meaningful endeavors which encourage growth, strength, balance and health of both the body and the mind. I am seeking a compatible, intelligent, attractive, open-minded woman between 15 and 25 to accompany me on my journey through this life as a friend and partner. Please send letter and photo to: Krsna Caitanya Jacobs, RR 2 Box 147A, Palmer, Nebraska 68864. (15)

I understand the importance and value of having a serious, committed, Vaisnava wife, and I seek a woman who has a similar attitude toward her husband. If we try and see each other's faults and shortcomings, as well as the challenges which are concomitant with life and a new relationship, as an impetus to serve Srila Prabhupada and Krsna; rather than an impediment, I'm sure this mood of humility will allow us to develop love for one another accordingly. I'm Srila Prabhupada's disciple, 41 years old, slim and healthy. I would prefer a younger wife, but will accept whatever Krsna arranges. If you are interested or know of a Vaisnava lady who may be, please write me for further details. I look forward to your early replies. Your servant, G. Dasa, 2108 Stuart St #4, Berkeley, CA 94705. USA.

37 year old male resident of New Vrindaban Community for nearly 10 years seeks mate to help establish *varnasrama-dharma* and a spiritually centered earth-based society focused on self sufficiency in the mood of "plain living and high thinking." This, I understand, is the vision that Srila Prabhupada had for this community. Am currently involved in an organic gardening project, desktop publishing and sign making, book distribution from our in-house publishing company, and music ministry. Hope to find someone inspired to help this largest of the North American farm communities get off to a new start in light of it's recent restructuring and realignment with the greater body of Vaisnava devotees. We are greatly blessed here with the frequent association of such great souls as H.H. Radhanatha Swami and Varsana Maharaja. I would like to hear from attractive,

affectionate women who have a desire to share and develop the honest, working relationships in family life that lead to an honest, working relationship with our Lord Sri Krsna. Will respond to all replies. Please write me: Dhruva dasa, c/o Palace Publishing, RD 1 Box 319, Moundsville, WV, 26041 (304) 843-1049. (15)

Father and Srila Prabhupada disciple seeks marriageable compatible woman, at least 24 years old, with or without children. Prefer Russian, European, Italian girl who is slender, attractive, feminine, affectionate, easy to get along with, friendly, and has a positive attitude. *Sankirtana* experience a plus, but must be devoted to Srila Prabhupada. I am employed, attractive, responsible, slim, healthy, friendly, optimistic, philosophical, independent (slightly!), a good *kirtana* leader and have a great sense of humor. I'm seeking a partner, not a servant, who will be a compliment to my Krsna consciousness (and vice versa), an affectionate wife and a good, loving mother to my children. Please respond to P.O. Box 875, Berkeley, CA 94701. All replies answered/treated confidentially. (16)

Would you like to help evolve a home Krsna conscious environment; participate in mature conjugal, family, and community relations; pursue Krsna consciousness while recognizing the need for a balanced intellectual, mental, emotional, and physical life; and preach by example and relationship to well-established American men and women? You and I can inspire each other to advance and communicate Prabhupada's love to others. We can be successful householder preachers in a land fertile for Krsna consciousness (USA). Certainly these objectives (and yours, too) may be difficult to achieve, but let's have fun trying. I'm looking for a mature woman with whom I can share goals and sacrifices. Initiated in 1967, I'm a steadily employed computer professional, 48, caring for a delightful 14 year old son. Write me, Dayananda dasa, 5111 Crossfield Ct. #11, Rockville, MD 20852. Tel: 301-770-4010. (13)

Indian life member of ISKCON for over a decade, active, in good health and spirit seeks Hindu or Hindu convert wife—young, healthy, loving, obedient, sincere, devoted and complimentary. I am 49 years, divorced, in export/import business, financially independent, seeking relocation and the most dharmic lifestyle as a householder in creative fulfilling and mutually beneficial relationship for the benefit of all beings, sentient and nonsentient. I have varied interests in the arts, media and social work. Correspond with returnable photograph to Dhruv Dalmia, 199, Golf Links, New Delhi 110 003, India. Tel/Fax 91-11-4617515. Every letter will be answered. Hari Bol. (25)

34 year old vegetarian male, semi-Krsna conscious, seeks vegetarian female 22-35 years old to share life, pursue Krsna. I have been chanting 16 rounds for nine years however I am not entirely fixed up. Please contact Paul Martin, 1014 Barclay Dr., Cocoa, FL 32927. (407) 636-0923. Photo and phone preferred. (13)

ISKCON Life Member, 30 years old single, college-educated, male, seeking Krsna conscious wife. I have been in the association of devotees for over ten years. I chant regularly. I'm into astrology, Krsna conscious rock & roll, FOLK programs, interfaith discussions, as well as writing and preaching Krsna Consciousness at the introductory level. I have many plans for services, and need a wife (partner, not a servant) to help me. Please write me: Vasu Murty, 30 Villanova Lane, Oakland, CA 94611. (25)

#### ADS

Novel series—Fictional scenarios of far future, high adventure, Vedic lore and history unfolding. Also discount gemstones, incense, books, tapes. Some books used. Also see about Gemstone free gift offer. Wholesale inquires also welcome. Just send stamp for free catalog to: Visoka, Box 43, Badger, CA 93603. See excerpts of fictional literature in the "Dawn" story. (13)

Want to reach those who are prejudiced because of hearsay? Would you like a means of preaching to hard hearted parents and atheists? Common Ground will establish a connection for you. After reading a few issues they'll be inquiring from you about Krsna's philosophy. For a trial issue send US\$1. Ed Ward (Ikshvaku dasa), Box 657, Paulden, AZ 86334. (13)

Oil Paintings of Krsna, Lord Caitanya, Srila Prabhupada, from BTG, Srimad Bhagavatam. For your temple, home, or office. Artist has 25 years of painting experience in ISKCON, plus art degree. Write for samples. Also: Children's Krsna book sets, 3 volumes, 9" x 11", 90 + pages and 60 + pictures per volume. \$8 per book, \$21 per set, plus shipping 20% USA, 30% Canada. Old BTG's for sale, send for list. Saradiya dasi c/o L.S. Lilot, 40 Ridge St. #2-S, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706. (914) 478-5987. (15)

Teacher needed for 1st graders and up in Miami gurukula. Send your resume to: Mangala Sakhi dd, P.O. Box 337, Coconut Grove, FL 33233. (16)

ISKCON Communications Journal is a forum, a "market place" for preachers in ISKCON. Each issue has more than sixty pages and is full of dynamic and

enthusing articles, written by ISKCON's preaching experts, to inspire and assist you in your preaching work for Srila Prabhupada. We invite you to subscribe! Just drop your name, address, and your check or money order in an envelope and mail it to: ICJ, 6 Quarry Court, Helens Bay, BT191TY, North. Ireland. Annual subscription (2 issues) \$18 or... 25DM... £10.

I would like to ask the lady disciples of Srila Prabhupada if they could so kindly share their memories of their personal association with Srila Prabhupada for the enlightenment of the present lady devotees in ISKCON and for those ladies that will come in the future to Krsna consciousness movement. The material gathered will be for the book called "Srila Prabhupada Teaching His Lady Disciples." So I humbly beg you all lady disciples to please give your valuable cooperation in this matter. Please send any material to: Andarupa devi dasi, Gustav Mollers gata 16, S-211 51 Malmö, Sweden

As It Is: The Voice of the Second Generation for gurukula alumni. Send submissions. Six issue subscriptions: US First class \$24.00; US Third class \$18.00, other: \$30.00. Write As It Is, P.O. Box 1395, Culver City, CA 90232. Tel: (310) 204-6944.

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.

Hare Krsna Rural Life newsletter devoted to the development of *varnasrama*, cow protection, ox power and self-sufficiency in the Hare Krsna movement. Philosophical and practical articles and news from devotees around the world. Edited by Hare Krsna dasi and Vyapaka dasa. Articles and news submissions welcome. Bi-annual subscription \$10.00 made payable to H.K.R.L. Please send to Hare Krsna dasi, 9B Stetson St., Brunswick, ME 04011.

#### SERVICES

Adoption Services. All inquiries and information held in the strictest confidence. If you're looking for a couple to adopt your baby, or are a couple looking to adopt a baby send your information, details, and specific requests to: Adopt-A-Child, P.O. Box 1952, Alachua, FL 32615. Tel: (904) 462-7795. Database of interested people currently under development. Already three good families seeking children to adopt. Only serious people need correspond/call.

### Women's Ministry Update

First, I'd like to personally thank each one of you who has responded to our introduction in the last issue of *Priti-laksanam*. The letters and overwhelming number of phone calls confirm to me the importance of the Ministry's formation as well as the myraid of issues which need to be addressed. A special thanks also to those who sent financial support. Without it, I would not have been able to begin even basic communications on this multi-faceted project.

#### Your suggestions

In our introductory article, I sought information as to what issues you felt most pertinent. Following is an overview of the responses received. Please bear in mind that this report represents only the "tip of the iceberg" as we are receiving new input daily.

Interestingly, the most addressed issue so far has been financial development: business opportunities for our ladies (who have proven extremely industrious in helping our movement grow, but are now in need), as well as on-going support for the Ministry's projects. Economic stability is of course a pressing concern for most devotees. Yet it peaked my interest that this single suggestion was by far the most perceived need for our ladies.

Second were the many other unresolved issues concerning the protection and facility for women. These issues ranged from:

- Fair / equal training and service opportunity for both men and women.
- No established communication channel for women to ISKCON management or justice systems. (*Decisions that impact women are often made without being informed by and about women. And many women have stated that often grave concerns and observations have been ignored or denied simply because they were presented by a female devotee.*)
- Condescension and subtle abuse in daily temple interactions, including a general misconception that ladies should be chaste and submissive to all men at any time as well as frequent use of pejorative terminology.
- Past training which has led to physical abuse in marriage "you can beat a mrdanga, horse, and wife"
- Irresponsibility and abandonment (this issue ranges from husbands and "fiances" using scripture as authority to leave a woman with his young children and aquired debt, only to then receive ISKCON managerial support in finding a new wife, or possibly seeking *sannyasa*—to concerns over sub-health standard or no ashrama facilities for women).

Many ladies and men also expressed gratitude to the NAGBC for forming the Ministry, while ladies overseas wrote hoping that soon this Ministry would expand globally.

#### Moving forward

Our next step will be to develop a network of ladies across North America who will serve as contacts and help initiate a variety of projects. We will also be gathering information from the temples as to the facility for women (or lack of), and designing a survey (with guidance from Professor Rocheford). The administration of this survey

will take place in the last months of 1994.

Moving forward means replacing the problems of the past with effective and mutually beneficial solutions. To find these solutions the Ministry will focus on increased communication, education, and when necessary, legislation. Although social upliftment seldom comes easily, we, as devotees have the added advantage of prayer and sensitivity to help us overcome our difficulties.

#### CLOSING THOUGHTS—Promoting a balanced life

Social issues such as abandonment and abuse are not specific only to ISKCON. Yet the pain of exploitation only seems to increase when found in a spiritual environment where one has sacrificed a great deal to cultivate devotional relationships based on love and trust.

As mature and responsible devotees, it is vital that we effectively uproot these anarthas, and re-establish appropriate behaviour based on respect for each other as spirit soul. Only then can we truly convey to others the greatness and compassion of Srila Prabhupada.

Please note: Further reflection on this point may be generated by reviewing Srila Prabhupada's Statement of Purposes as found on the inside cover of *Back to Godhead* magazine, particularly points 6 & 7 which read as follows:

- To promote a balanced, natural way of life, informed by spiritual values
- To increase spritual fellowship among all living beings, in relationship with Lord Sri Krishna.

#### CONTACTS:

Amongst the ladies of ISKCON one finds many talented and dedicated individuals. Several of these women have stepped forward to serve as contact people in different regions of North America. I hope their involvement—and the participation of many others like them—will increase support for the Ministry, and be the ultimate key to it's success.

#### NORTHEASTERN STATES

Nandimukhi d.d. (718) 784-2459  
Saradiya d.d. (914) 478-5987  
Arcana siddhi dd (410) 455-0467

#### SOUTHEASTERN STATES

Pranada d.d. (904) 462-7981  
Titiksa d.d. (904) 462-7377  
Kunti dd (904) 462-5054

#### CENTRAL & WESTERN STATES

Malati dd (717) 527-2450  
Kulapriya dasi (303) 377-4060  
Kosa rupa dasi (714) 497-2254

#### CANADA

Padyavali d.d.(604) 436-0171  
Ladu Gopal dd (604) 453-2085