

Priti-laksanam

A Forum for Vaisnava Discussion
Volume 5, December 1992

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

— Nectar of Instruction, Text Four

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

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

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Notes from the Editor On the Editorial Policy

I heard some devotees questioning *Priti-laksanam's* editorial policy, especially in regards to the article "Same-Sex Pairing" by Rasamanjari dasi. One devotee wrote me, "Srila Prabhupada rarely even mentioned the subject [therefore why are you printing articles on it?]."

The fact is also, though, that we are dealing with this subject more and more in our preaching; therefore, a discussion on the matter is not out of line. But beyond that we come to the real question: How should I censor the editorial of *Priti-laksanam*? I find it a difficult question to answer. But let me try.

Priti-laksanam is meant to be an open forum for discussion on all topics that affect or relate to our Society or the individuals in our Society. The discussion should not be censored or directed

in an "official" way, but should allow devotees around the world to express themselves. Views expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect my beliefs, nor what may be the official stand of the leaders of our Society. The discussion must remain clean of personal attacks on individuals (no Vaisnava *aparadhas*) to be published. And the discussion must have some Krsna conscious direction or intent—even if the writer is off the mark of the Vaisnava *siddhanta*. Such a situation will be corrected by the discussion itself.

As Kundali Prabhu writes, "*Priti-laksanam* is a healthy forum for trial by fire purification. Whatever thoughts a contributor puts forward will not tarnish the whole Society or any sincere devotee's heart. Rather it is beneficial to the contributor, who can get his view challenged with the right or higher Krsna conscious view."

I cannot be a sole arbiter of issues in our Society.

My conviction is that mature devotees will understand the purpose of *Priti-laksanam* and not be side-tracked by the fact that sometimes views expressed are not strictly the absolute truth or ISKCON's party line. The open discussion is meant to allow devotees to evolve and deepen in their realizations and convictions by sharing with their Godsisters and Godbrothers. We need to grant the contributors a safe haven of love and trust and not immediately condemn them. Let's be sensitive to each other. Let's help each other advance in Krsna consciousness by augmenting an individual's view with a broader perspective. The process of becoming Krsna conscious is an

evolutionary one. It takes time and the association of devotees.

These are my thoughts. I welcome yours.

With this issue of *Priti-laksanam* I'd like to propose that we focus in each issue on various vital topics for our movement. Here's a list of themes I received from our Godbrother Dravida dasa:

1. *Varnasrama*.
2. Education (this could include some frank assessments from *gurukula* alumni).
3. Women in ISKCON (you've dealt with this some, but it's not an issue that's going to go away).
4. The problems of staying strong in Krsna consciousness far away from a temple.
5. Why is Krsna consciousness struggling in the United States and booming abroad?
6. The *guru* question(s).
7. A social welfare system (safety net) for ISKCON: Why is there none? Should there be one? How to implement one?
8. The role of the GBCs and temple presidents in keeping ISKCON going (or slowing it down).
9. Is there a need for outside counseling (psychological, marriage, astrological, etc.).
10. Higher education in *karmi* universities: good, bad, or in between?

Please send me your suggestions for themes, too—or do some researching and writing on any topic listed above. With your theme include thought-provoking questions that would stimulate dialogue.

For the next issue, I thought we could focus on a question asked in a *Bhagavatam* class here in San Diego, regarding the importance of scriptural injunctions. There are many injunctions and they are meant to govern our lives. But are all of them supposed to direct us? How serious should we take them? Are they to be adjusted according to time, place, and circumstance? How do we view those who do not follow them?

Somone asked about the injunction to take *sannyasa* at fifty. Are ISKCON devotees supposed to follow this injunction? We see many devotees starting a family in their forties. The discussion that ensued brought up a concern about social issues.

There are myriad issues that affect our daily lives, how we develop ISKCON and how we grow within it. Where can we improve, where are we

going wrong, and who (if anyone) is supposed to be doing something about it? Can local communities begin to implement ideas?

I'll list some questions to get the discussion going.

Why do we see so many people starting, continuing, or restarting families in their forties (or late in life, or after one marriage already)? Does it have something to do with renouncing when we were young and trying to catch up with material business now? Was that renunciation artificial? Are there better options? How will raising families late in life affect those devotees and especially the children? What are the benefits of having families late in life? What parallels are there between the devotee and nondevotee community in this regard? Does our Society have to prepare in some way for what will come because of this phenomena? For instance, men and women who would normally be coming out of family life (*vanaprastha*) to dedicate full-time service to the Society again are being pulled into (or back into) family life where the focus is naturally different.

Why don't we see the natural evolution of the *asramas* from *brahmacharya*, *grhastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*? (Instead we see evolutions like *brahmacharya*, *sannyasa*, *grhastha*) What can be done to improve the situation?

Should there be a department in ISKCON to address social issues such as this one? What can be done on a local level?

Does the society's management have any role in taking care of women by seeing that they are properly married? What can we do about seeing to that responsibility? What support system should our communities develop to help marriages stay together? Should marriages begin earlier in life?

If you think about this I'm sure more questions will come to mind. Next deadline for submissions is March 10, 1993.

It is a personal satisfaction to me that the newsletter is being appreciated by devotees around the world. I've included a short note I received from Loka Saksi dasa, who is the GBC in Brazil. He is using the newsletter to aid his local community discussions. Balabhadra Bhattacharya Prabhu, the temple president in Atlanta, told me that the newsletter was invaluable to him because it kept him in touch with

the needs and concerns of the "common" devotee, who he is rarely in touch with. We hope more leaders will take advantage of *Priti-laksanam* to hear openly from those they have been given the service to guide. It will go a long way in breaking barriers and re-establishing communication in our Society.

Subscriptions to *Priti-laksanam* are free (for now). Send your name and address and I'll include you on the mailing list. I welcome donations; they are used to defray costs.

Back issues are available at \$1.00 each. There are four issues to date. Please include *laksmi* when requesting them.

Priti-laksanam's address has changed to P.O. Box 1952, Alachua, FL 32615. Please make a note of it; the change is effective immediately.

—Pranada dasi

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My thanks to the following devotees who donated *laksmi* to publish this issue of *Priti-laksanam*:

Anonymous, Los Angeles	\$11.00
Rasamanjari, California	8.00
Brian Walter, San Diego	\$20.00
Viraja dasi, Washington	\$10.00
Gunagrahi Maharaja, Dallas	\$10.00
Rasapriya dasi, S. Africa	\$10.00
Bob Roberts, Michigan	\$5.00
Dinatarine dasi, Wash.	\$30.00
Vasu Murty, California	\$20.00
Bhakta Vic, Dallas	\$5.00
Karnamrta dasa	\$20.00
Stutya dasa, Alachua, FL	\$5.00
Anonymous, Badger, Ca	\$50.00
Jack Maurice, Canada	\$5.00
Madhavi dasi, UK	\$7.00
Praghosa dasa, Ireland	\$10.00
Sita dasi, UK	\$25.00
Vasudeva datta dasa, Rome	\$13.00
Loka Saksi dasa, Brazil	\$2.00
M. dasi, UK	\$5.00
Isana dasa, Montana	\$10.00

PERSONALS

I received a complaint that the personal ads I'm running are not all in good taste, as promised. It was pointed out that some were ads from women who have been married previously and are looking for a second marriage. While I'm of the belief that women should not remarry, I cannot know

should not remarry, I cannot know everyone's situation. It would be impossible for me to critique each ad regarding the position of the individual. Neither am I qualified to make judgments about who is doing what, why, and if it's all right. For this reason, unless the wording of the ad is overly-licentious I will print it—with one exception. I received a Personal seeking a homosexual relationship. I will not print ads seeking gay or lesbian relationships.

—Pdd

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

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

Male disciple of Srila Prabhupada, 43, educated and capable, leader-type is looking for a wife 35-45 who is enthusiastic about Krsna consciousness; friendly; very clean; supportive, and good at dealing with people. Children OK. Interested in simple country living in community of devotees, and preaching from that arena. Photo appreciated/returned. Reply c/o Priti-laksanam.

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

Female disciple of Srila Prabhupada seeks a relationship with mature, emotionally healthy male devotee who is interested in real relating, getting in

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

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

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

ADS

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

I would like single or married people (between 5 and 10) to come to the country and establish common goals. 40 acres just suitable for contemplation about retirement in Southern California. Send inquiries to James Clearfield (Jagannatha dasa), 2039 Civic Center Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89030-6311.

A great lady, disciple of Srila Prabhupada. Devoted wife and mother

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

"Krsna Dreams" is a new book now being written and compiled as an offering for Srila Prabhupada's Centennial. This unusual and mystical book, will include dreams devotees may have had over the years in their devotional life. Any dreams related to Srila Prabhupada, Krsna, the *Vedas*, etc., may be sent with your name and how many years with ISKCON to the following address: W. Dorian, 3541 Helms Avenue, Culver City, Ca 90232, USA or call (310) 839-7898.

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

LETTERS

A Rich Source of Information and Inspiration
Loka Saksi dasa
GBC Brazil

Thank you for sending me Priti-laksanam. I started regular seminars here in Brazil to discuss issues on relationships, and the role of women and family life in Krsna consciousness, to name a few topics. Your forum for Vaisnava discussion is a rich source of information and inspiration.

Homosex Cannot be Legitimized
Kavindra Swami
ISKCON Hawaii

I think your newsletter is a good idea and serves a valuable purpose in our Society. I just read Volume 4 and found

some well thought out and relevant statements in it.

There was one defect, though, that turned off many people and made them mentally reject the good things. The last letter, which is often read first or second, advocated same-sex pairing. We are not particularly against homosexuals. We ideally disapprove of all sex life, except with very strict regulations and for the purpose of producing children to be trained in Krsna consciousness. We should follow Srila Prabhupada's example. He rarely mentioned this subject. We certainly want everyone to chant and become purified so they can follow the regulative principles. But we don't sanction intoxication or meat-eating, and hope for a change.

Those who are addicted to sense gratification should surely chant, but they should know that their sense gratification is unwanted. I will probably be labeled homophobic, but that is not the case. We actually reject all illicit sex. In fact, Srila Prabhupada writes that sex, licit or illicit is not much different, except that one may be able to give up licit sex. Homosex can never produce children; it cannot be legitimized.

**Priti-laksanam Helps Increase
Our Compassion**
Dinatarine devi dasi
Vienna, VA

Thank you for sending us your newsletter. Both Yamuna and I have enjoyed the contents. It is inspiring to see that despite the seemingly constant quandries and difficulties that devotees are confronted with so many sincere souls are pursuing Krsna consciousness with sparrow-like determination. These forums for discussion can not only help to clarify and increase our understanding of this wonderful philosophy of Krsna consciousness, but also enable us to grow by learning to appreciate the views of other aspirants and, thereby, to increase our compassion for the difficulties experienced by our Godbrothers and Godsisers along the way.

Practical Ideas to Put into Practice
Mahakratu dasa
Belfast, Ireland

Without this kind of communication it is impossible to know what individuals are going through or how different devotees handle similar situations. We often can be lulled into a "poor me" syndrome, thinking that it only

happens to me or that my problems are the worst. We forget that others need listening to, too.

Straight philosophy is all right, but we need practical ideas how to put it into practice. Srila Prabhupada spent much of his valuable time corresponding with his followers or answering different queries that arose from day to day. He wanted us to learn his books, not just in theory but in practice. And he wanted to establish a system of taking exams to give a brahminical foundation. Unfortunately, we haven't instituted this yet. Devotees are still being given brahminical initiation because a temple needs a *pujari* or a cook.

It's clear that our initiation procedure is not producing the type of devotee Prabhupada envisaged. Perhaps our Society should look at an Open University style scheme and regular tutorials in understanding the practice of the philosophy and the daily application.

A Small Gesture to our Godbrothers
Mukara dasi
Dublin, Ireland

I only received Volume 4, but I gathered that some space has been devoted to the topic of women in ISKCON. It would be unrealistic if women had no problems, but so much is made of their physical position in the temple room that I feel any other problems they have must be very trivial.

I have been a devotee for twelve years and have visited three or four temples. I was never made to feel inferior or unequal by being a woman. Previously when I was church-going I always stayed in the back out of choice. Krsna can see us no matter where we are in the temple, or whether we can see His form or not. During many hours of the day the temple room is empty and we can choose then to go in any position we wish. More often than not a devotee will stay in the back on these occasions.

I think we should look at this tradition in a positive way: Staying at the back of the temple room as a small gesture of our gratefulness and appreciation to our Godbrothers who take such good care of us on a spiritual level.

Bring Them Back Together
Anonymous
Georgia

I understand that you would like to bring together devotees from "inside" and "outside" of ISKCON. Here are a

few observations to consider, some of which we may have heard before.

1. Many devotees do not go to the temple because they disagree with how devotees are treated. Devotees are humble by nature and many prefer to withdraw rather than get in the middle of things. We have seen that some leaders/managers are not trained in how to deal with people who do not see things their way.

2. Many times the interactions are very superficial and tend to focus on getting donations.

3. I know it can be a dilemma because those who leave the association of devotees usually have poor *sadhana*. But poor *sadhana* is no worse than improperly treating devotees. I feel that much of the rife can be healed when people in leadership positions in ISKCON fully, *really* comprehend how important it is for all of us to work together as Srila Prabhupada wanted. The first step toward mending relationships needs to come from the management side.

Let's seek out those who have left, take them seriously, treat them with love, trust and respect. ISKCON can be healed.

**Real Vaisnava Association:
An Idea Who's Time Has Come**
Mulaprakriti dasi
Badger, CA

It is wonderful that in *Priti-laksanam* our devotional family, dysfunctional as it may sometimes seem, is opening the doors for communication on essential issues. Deep honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and loving care amongst ourselves is so important. In recent years, many of us who have ignored these things have learned our lessons the hard way. It seems we need each other more than ever if we are to serve Srila Prabhupada successfully.

Over the last decade, my husband, Gopavrndapala dasa and I have explored and gathered information and experience on the general topic of devotee relationships, marriage (male-female psychology), families, and community cooperation. We've found that ancient Vedic descriptions dealing particularly with human nature equally apply in our modern condition. Understanding this nature and the skills to dovetail it devotionally are keys to societal harmony. Together with many devotee friends and communities in California (and beyond) we've experimented with surprising success. Already some exciting insights and

practical applications have resulted.

In New Braja Bhumi (Badger, CA), Three Rivers, Santa Cruz, Portland (and perhaps elsewhere we've not yet seen) there are devotees gathering regularly each week for men's and women's meetings. Some have been intimately associating week after week (or more often) for as long as six years. In our friendships we are trying to break barriers of false ego, isolation, and mistrust. Using commitment and confidentiality as tools, we gather tangible support from each other for advancement in every aspect of our lives. This has produced deep working relationships, personal stability, and lots of nectar for us all. We are grateful for this treasure of Vaisnava association.

Once devotees feel love, acceptance, and encouragement from each other the natural result is to share it. Together we've helped sponsor celebrations of Krsna conscious festivals and Deity service in home and community temples, annual state-wide devotee campouts, father-son and mother-daughter (and vice-versa) events, Young Yadu boys club, Gopi Girls and BhakTeens groups, recovery support for compulsions and addictions, family and couples evenings, and Vaisnava Kid's Days, among others. The possibilities for expanding and enriching our association are endless.

It seems these ideas have yielded results. Nevertheless, we know that example is better than precept so we've tried not to advertise. But because of increasing interest and requests we want to reach out, communicate and share more widely now. If anyone would like to discuss the topic, please contact us. A group from our area is also volunteering to help with the Devotee Relationship Conference to be held this April in Topanga Canyon, California. We look forward to seeing many of you there. It will be an ideal time to seriously discuss these issues of strengthening the bonds between all the devotees in Srila Prabhupada's extended family—an idea whose time has come!

Contact Mulaprakirti dasi and/or Gopavrndapala dasa, P.O. Box 143, Badger, CA 93603 (209) 337-2545.

Wanted: Faith Building Stories

Karnamrta dasa & Arcana Siddhi dasi
Baltimore, MD

We'd like to announce a new project, which will continue to evolve and be refined until we are finished taking

interviews. The devotee community at large is an incredible untapped storehouse of practical spiritual wisdom, insight, Krsna conscious life-experience and a reservoir of faith-building experiences that will inspire and give hope to all devotees.

We all have nectar experiences or difficulties at one time or another on our devotional journey. We want to compile those stories to inspire others on the *bhakti* path. Let us know how you survived materially, and spiritually prospered from intense problems. Such problems include but are not limited to crises in faith, offenses, debilitating or life-threatening illnesses, divorce, falldown, humiliation, overwhelming grief, loss of loved one(s), loss of position (material or spiritual), loss of possessions, etc.

When did Krsna help you to succeed or excel in your service, or help you to overcome obstacles? When did Krsna fulfill your heartfelt desire in a wonderful way beyond your imagination? What were your victories, triumphs, celebrations, inspirations. Of course, the positives and so-called negatives may go together. Sometimes devotees are apt to appreciate the negative while having difficulty accepting the positive. One of the points of the book is to show how Krsna works in all circumstances for the devotee's spiritual advancement.

If you have trouble getting in touch with your faith foundation or feel blocked, think about how you became a devotee and the transformation you went through. Do you have Deity stories, preaching stories, Prabhupada or *guru* stories? Take some time, go within, reflect, pray, remember. Mine your nectar gems. Be specific about how your experience increased your faith.

Please help us compile this book by submitting your experiences. You can submit written material or a taped dictation. Perhaps you can have a group gathering of friends and tape the discussion as you reminisce.

We also want to know what are the most memorable or inspiring quotes from Srila Prabhupada that have given you shelter.

Your help through feedback, stories, inspiring quotes or simply sharing this information about the project with friends will be greatly appreciated. We welcome donations.

Please contact us at 4309 Wilkens Ave #C, Baltimore, MD 21229. Phone (410) 536-9448.

ESSAYS

A Birthday Prayer

Anonymous

India

Twenty-one years ago today, I was initiated. And, by Srila Prabhupada's mercy, for twenty-one years I have never stopped trying to be a devotee.

In the course of those years, I've attended thousands of classes. But I have never given a class. I've attended thousands of *kirtanas*. But I have never led one. Usually, there aren't even instruments available for me to play. I have never participated in making even one decision that affected the Society that I've dedicated my life to and contributed over a hundred thousand dollars to.

In twenty-one more years (or thirty-one or forty-one), will I feel more connected to the Society than I do today? No. I am a woman. The male leaders limit women's participation.

While waiting for our movement to mature, I have grown tired. Tired of feeling unwelcome; tired of feeling third class. And I am afraid that my daughter will grow up feeling as I do—that my presence is acceptable only when I collect cash.

Recently my son announced that he wanted to be a *sannyasi*. Why? Not to preach Krsna consciousness, but to eat and live opulently. To control people and money. He envisioned householders begging from him for facilities and funds to do their service, just as they now beg from the *sannyasis* on the GBC.

My husband and I are fed up.

We and a group of like-minded devotees are separating ourselves—blooming if you like. We will practice Krsna consciousness as we have understood it from Prabhupada's teachings.

Today, on my spiritual birthday, I pray that I may participate to my heart's content in Krsna consciousness and that I may soon realize that I am not my body but a humble servant of Lord Krsna. I pray that as they grow up, my children will be free of all misconceptions about the practice of *bhakti-yoga* and thus be able to relish its sweetness.

Thoughts on the *Grhastha Asrama*

Maitreya Dasa

Alachua, Florida

First I would like to join with many others in thanking you for publishing *Priti-laksanam*. When devotees are inspired to write, they are inspired indeed, and it is a valuable service to inspire devotees.

I spent ten years in the *brahmacari asrama*, from 1980 to 1990. I was completely happy throughout my whole experience as a *brahmacari*, but also unaware that I had many misconceptions about the *grhastha asrama*. It was only in the last year, when I began to experience a desire to marry, that I was hampered by misconceptions about what this important, and nearly universal, transition means. These were misconceptions that were unwittingly taught to me by other *brahmacaris*, *sannyasis*, temple leaders and even other householders.

I was led to believe that marrying is a step down, that to marry is somehow dishonorable, and that even if one somehow manages to survive, it is only so much time wasted. This unfortunate viewpoint encourages denial and pretense among *brahmacaris*. The *brahmacari* who is trained and ready to accept the responsibility of the *grhastha asrama* should understand that he is taking a step up. This is a time for becoming more serious—about his *sadhana* and all other aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now he is accepting responsibility for the spiritual lives of others. If it is seen by *brahmacaris* only as a concession for those who cannot control their sex impulses, then when a *brahmacari* enters household life he will think, "Now it's time to enjoy. I was strict as a *brahmacari*, but now that I'm a *grhastha* I can relax." Nothing could be further from the truth. I'm afraid that it is this spoken, and oft unspoken, conception of the *grhastha asrama* that has been the seed for many offenses and fall-down within and without the *grhastha asrama*.

My proposal is that we present the *brahmacari asrama* in a more realistic and practical way. It is the training period to form perfect character and prepare men to meet the challenges of the *grhastha asrama*. It should last at least five years. The idea is that all boys should be trained as *brahmacaris* and nearly all of them will marry. Their duty is not to become *nastika brahmacaris*, but to learn how to be ideal *grhasthas* and produce children who will be an asset to society. These all important functions of the *grhastha* community are undermined by misconceptions and improper training.

Grhastha asrama requires a great deal of sacrifice and personal introspec-

tion in order to work. Those who are making these sacrifices are contributing in a substantial way to the overall success and prosperity of our Society. They should be honored, and those aspiring to follow in their footsteps should be encouraged.

Fellowship?

Rohininandana dasa
London, England

There are moments in everyone's life which provide an opportunity to change old attitudes and behavior.

One such moment came in 1984, during a Sunday Feast in Johannesburg. I was preaching to a guest when he suddenly interjected, "You know something, you've got great food, a great philosophy, and your Deity worship is superb. You've got so many nice things, but there's one thing you sorely lack: fellowship."

I can't say that I was able to immediately appreciate his words. After all, who was he? A guest. A materialist. A *karmi*. A neophyte devotee. What had he done for Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya? How many books had he distributed? How many devotees had he made? How many *mangala-aratis* had he attended? Was he even following the regulative principles? What understanding did he have of Vaisnava relationships? Why should I take his words seriously? He just didn't realize that we are the only really spiritual people on the planet, with the answers to all problems.

Externally I could not have admitted that I possessed such sentiments, and I tried to be humble, but the notion that everyone else was rubbish compared to us was imbedded in my psyche.

Yet I did not forget his words. I could not, because I could see truth in them, echoed by a personal loneliness often felt by devotees in our communities.

By Lord Kṛṣṇa's grace I know we are in the vicinity of the Absolute Truth, which includes all other truths. We have that chance. But I cannot assume either that I possess it or that I am a devotee. And I cannot assume that no one else has any good qualities except me. Nor can I assume that I have made, or can make, a quantum leap into transcendence.

Srila Prabhupada once commented that a devotee and a nondevotee are the same, except that the object of all devotee's efforts is Lord Kṛṣṇa. He also reprimanded a disciple for assuming

that we devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are transcendental to the modes of nature. He said, "You are not transcendental. You are trying to be transcendental. You should always remember that, 'We are trying to be transcendental.' " (11/5/75) Another time Srila Prabhupada said that actually "devotee" means "*uttama-adhikari*." (5/8/76)

We who are trying to be devotees may find ourselves grappling and struggling with all the same problems that others in this world must contend with.

People are most interested to see how we are living and how we deal with what they call the realities of life. They expect to see that people who claim to have the best of everything have an answer for all personal and social issues, not just theory based on an ancient model. They naturally want to see us come up with the goods.

It's useless to try to deny that a problem exists. After all, life presents a series of problems that we can recognize and try to solve, ignore, or hope will go away. People with a reasonable amount of intelligence (whom Kṛṣṇa consciousness is meant for) want to know what's behind our smiling faces. They want to see how we solve our problems and get on with each other on a day-to-day level.

When I began to think about fellowship, I began to admit to myself that perhaps I did possess attitudes and styles of behavior that were not conducive for real fellowship. My secret attitude toward that guest surprises me now. How arrogant I was! How small-minded and dishonest. While I harbored such feelings of superiority, how could I ever have had a genuine relationship with that man?

I can't say that I'm now free of such impersonalism in the guise of personalism, but I can say that I'm working on it and that thankfully our ISKCON family has become a place where examining behavioral tendencies and attitudes is much more encouraged than it ever was in the past.

So what did he mean by "fellowship"?

Unfortunately, I never asked him. My own thoughts are that fellowship is an important branch of association. It encompasses the vital qualities of sharing, intimacy, empathy, and love for our fellows, which does not necessarily develop automatically simply by living, worshiping and preaching alongside each other.

Fifteen years ago I remember

feeling sorry that I didn't seem to have time for any more than "*Hari Bol, Prabhu*" as I raced along the temple corridors. I raised my hand at the end of a *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class and voiced my feelings. The reply both relieved and confused me: I was just fine the way I was. Keep racing along!

Fellowship, at least the way I am thinking here, goes deeper than actions. Fellowship means to share myself with another person. Fellowship is not easy for me. It is relatively easy to mechanically go through an external procedure in which I do not expose myself, but to spontaneously reveal my heart to others can be a frightening prospect.

One of our *sannyasis* once disclosed, "The higher one gets in this Society, the less people one can be open with." When he said this I felt sad. Could leading members of a spiritual society not feel increasingly inclined to share themselves in the safety of a loving and trusting family?

When I reflected on my own sense of isolation I realized that throughout my life I have developed many ways of avoiding actual contact with others. Prejudice is obviously one of them. As with most other aberrations, prejudice comes from hearing. For instance, I heard from my father that all Americans are loud-mouths, so when an American begins to speak in a stentorian manner, my introjected prejudice still tends to block my ability to hear what he has to say. At least I am now conscious of this and so it is less of an impairment, but there are many other introjections that I am either unconscious of or only barely so. Here's an example:

I was sitting as a new *bhakta* in a *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class given by R. Swami. In the purport, Srila Prabhupada quoted the *maha-mantra*: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. As R. Maharaja started to read Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, all the other devotees began joining in. In an irritated voice he exclaimed, "Why can't you ever listen?" His words had such a lasting impression upon me that every time I was in a similar situation I not only remembered them, but I also become critical, "Why can't they ever listen?" And of course I didn't join in with the chanting. Even when I heard Srila Prabhupada recite the *maha-mantra* on a lecture tape, when everyone joins in with him I still felt the same, even though he is clearly not bothered by the joining in of the devotees, and probably likes it.

I remained biased against such chanters for twenty years. At last I became conscious enough of what was going on within me to be able to consider whether I wished to continue or not being ruled by someone else's attitude. Clearly I was allowing myself to become polluted by a regular dose of criticism. And anyway, what's wrong with following along with the chanting of the holy names at any time or place? So I began to force myself to chant along with everyone, and also I disclosed my predicament to others. By doing these two things I felt some relief and a freedom to think for myself and decide whether I wished to hear or chant the *mantra* when it is recited by a speaker.

Perhaps R. was in fact trying to get devotees to think for themselves instead of mindlessly following along, although with me he achieved the opposite: instead of following my own inclination, I was following his.

One devotee found this little story platitudinous, but I include it because it illustrates how when we joined ISKCON as spiritual children we vacuumed up whole most things that we heard from our authorities or parent figures, without much thought or discrimination. And of course not everything we heard was healthy because those leaders themselves were not as transcendental as we, and perhaps they, assumed. They still retained their own subtle defects and prejudices, maybe outside of their awareness. We in turn became "older devotees" and disseminated our version of Krsna consciousness, mixed with our own introjections from before and after joining ISKCON. And the result was that besides spreading Krsna consciousness we spread diseases like prejudice.

To counteract such dysfunction and to achieve greater intimacy amongst ourselves we need to clearly understand and see what happens between us when we are in each other's company. We need to allow others at least a glimpse of our real selves (as opposed to the armored versions). We need to become aware of, and work through the impediments to intimacy that may presently restrict us.

Srila Prabhupada has given us a truly challenging order in requesting us to cooperate together to spread Krsna consciousness. If we can do it, the result will surely be wonderful for both ourselves and the rest of the world.

Two Tales of Niyamagraha

Suresvara dasa
Gita-nagari, PA

Lady Whiteletter

It was Radhastami day. The young mother was tired but determined. For two weeks, her sick baby had kept her home and away from the temple. First it was a chest cold. Up with her half the night coughing and crying. Then impetigo, up again coughing and scratching. Then teeth coming in brought more midnight screaming.

Pita hadn't been much help. He snoozed next to his fan a couple of rooms away, then snuck away to the temple while Mata and the baby were dropping off for the first time. Later he returned to find his "ladies" exhausted and still in pajamas.

But today would be different, the mother resolved. She would fast and attend Radharani's noon *arati* at the temple. "My dear Srimati Radharani," she prayed, "Srila Prabhupada said You are the best devotee of Krsna. Please help me and baby come see You today."

It took all morning to get the baby bathed and dressed. The phone kept ringing, then a single mother dropped by for advice. Then the baby got sick all over the bathroom floor. And when at last Mata got her in the tub, she screamed and screamed when soap got in her eyes.

By now, Mata would have given up going to the temple. But somehow Radharani was helping her bounce through her troubles and stay fixed on the goal: get to the temple, praise Radharani, and pray for Her strength in devotional service.

Pita came into the house sweating. He had been gathering firewood for the cold months ahead. He needed to shower before going to the temple to perform Srimati Radharani's *arati*. When Mata told him about the crazy morning, he was amazed they were able to shower and dress. "Radharani must really want to see you," he smiled. "I'll drive us over in ten minutes."

Riding in the car, the baby caught the excitement. "Who we gonna go see?" asked Mata, and the baby flung her hands toward pictures of Radharani. Every time Pita said, "temple," she clapped her hands like the devotees in *kirtana*.

Soon the temple appeared among the tall pines. Mata's heart leapt as Pita pulled into the dirt parking lot. Pita visited the temple nearly every day, but Mata's absence had made her heart

grow fonder. As Pita disappeared around the back of the temple to prepare the *arati*, Mata fixed the baby's *tilaka* and *bindi* and adjusted the rose *sari* she had worn for Srimati Radharani.

An older woman in white stood before the temple. She knew the younger woman smiling and strolling toward her and wondered: Where has this young lady been? Why hasn't she been coming to the temple? (eyes now hard as flint) Uh-huh. Another one gone the way of all flesh. What did someone say Prabhupada said? "The baby becomes the deity."

Mata was happy to see the older woman, who reminded her of the temple. She was about to greet her when the woman spoke first. "Oh, you still live here?"

The young woman didn't know what to say. Her smile turned to disbelief. The old woman's sarcastic words hung in the air between them like smoke from a gun. No, thank God, thought Mata as she walked silently past the white *sari*. I don't live here. But I live near here.

She led her baby into the temple and bowed down before Srimati Radharani, who marked on her face the unspeakable hurt.

Lady Blackletter

The day of the temple reunion the old cook was tired but excited. "I haven't seen some of these devotees in years," she thought, scanning the list of confirmed guests. Memories swam by as she read the names. The devotee who managed the cows the year they won best in the state; the lady who sacrificed many years collecting money to support the community; the jack-of-all-trades with the sunny smile; the girl who cleaned at midnight; the school-master who sounded like Captain Kangaroo; the husband and wife who tried to manage it all.

The list went on, but the cook's time was short. There were few hands to help her prepare the day's feast. After communalism had run its course, most devotees had left the temple to fend for themselves. The old cook had said good-bye to them and wished them well. Only a few devotees remained, along with what one called the four Ds: dirt, dilapidation, disorganization, depression.

But the cook never complained, even as most of the work fell on her shoulders. She accepted whatever happened as the kindness of the Deities to Whom she daily offered her carefully

prepared dishes. Nor was she naive. She knew the temple was deteriorating, but she took the hardships as a challenge, an opportunity to deepen her love for Lord Krsna.

"*Mataji*," said a new devotee cutting vegetables, "sometimes I think your surrender is all that keeps this temple going."

"Krsna keeps us going," smiled the cook through tired eyes. "Hey, look at this name on the guest list." The helper stared blankly at the name. "Oh, you don't know her, I forgot. She loved the Deities, but she had a crush on somebody's husband. She used to confide in me late at night. I tried to help her, but then she left. I've always wondered what happened to her."

What happened was she met a wealthy businessman, got married, and had been traveling the world ever since. When an invitation to the reunion caught up with her, she thought it was quaint and decided to go.

As the guests arrived, the old cook's excitement grew. She scurried about the kitchen, readying the feast for the altar. She couldn't wait to share Krsna consciousness with her old friends. She remembered each person vividly, especially the young woman she had tried to counsel while everyone slept.

Suddenly the back door opened and there she was. Quite the lady now, decked in pearls and black furs next to her husband. She looked in and began to notice each and every crack in the broken-down kitchen. How could anyone live like this? She thought, eyeing the torn linoleum and leaky spigots. How did I live like this?

When the old cook saw her, she wiped her hands excitedly on her apron and walked over to give her a big hug. "*Mataji*," she beamed, flinging her arms around the young woman.

The lady in black stood still, only half-recognizing the old cook. She rolled her eyes toward her husband. "They offer granulated sugar to these garish dolls, Jim. You have to see it to believe it." She looked down at the old woman and smiled with disdain. "Oh, you still live here?"

The old woman didn't know what to say. Yes, I still live here, thank God, she thought. I can understand her forgetting me, but how could she forget the One who loves her? The young lady laughed, not caring for the hurt in the old cook's eyes.

Epilogue: Whether following the letter or flouting the letter, our *niyamagrahas*

miss the spirit of Krsna consciousness. May His Divine Grace protect our tender creepers from their trampling feet.

Thoughts on Therapy in Krsna Consciousness

Arcana Siddhi dasi
Baltimore, Maryland

The therapeutic process is an adjunct to our *sadhana*. It allows a trained person to help us change our unhealthy patterns and learn more productive ways of interacting with the external world. Chanting and serving dissolve the subtle body, but it is generally a slow process. In the meantime, we have to work through the subtle body to engage in transcendental service. I do my service using a polluted consciousness filled with unwanted things and if I chant sincerely, the impurities will diminish. Practical experience has shown that devotees often need help with their negative feelings and perceptions due to lifetimes of material conditioning.

Therapy and counseling are an additional support to help the devotee get through the vast intermediate zone and help the devotee remain fixed in their goal and avoid offenses that may result from their *anarthas* and too little attention or misunderstanding from Godbrothers and Godsisters. Below, I will briefly outline what I see to be the essence of the therapeutic process in Krsna consciousness:

1. The therapeutic relationship allows a person to feel safe revealing his/her mind since confidentiality is a basic principle.
2. The therapeutic relationship gives the devotee a place to ventilate bottled-up feelings that would otherwise come out in dysfunctional or destructive behaviors toward self and others.
3. The therapeutic relationship helps the devotee to confront behavior patterns that may be hindering relationships with others and sabotaging his/her service.
4. The therapeutic relationship helps the devotee acknowledge anger, lust, greed and envy in a nonjudgmental setting and together with the therapist can generate creative ways to tackle the behavior and keep it in check.
5. The therapeutic relationship helps the devotee understand how the past (i.e. relationships with parents, etc.) have helped shaped his/her current perceptions and behaviors. This understanding can help unconscious patterns become more conscious. When our

behavioral motivations come into the conscious realm we can then understand them and make choices to correct them. They no longer have the power over us that they did when they were submerged in the unconscious.

Yes, chanting will do all of the above, so the combination of chanting and guidance of the therapeutic process will help expedite the devotee's journey into transcendence.

Krishna Conscious Marriage Is:

Dasaratha-suta dasa

Atlanta, Georgia

- *serving Krsna together
- *wanting to serve Krsna together
- *praying to Srimati Radharani, the supreme Goddess of Love, for Her wisdom and grace
- *feeding each other the nectar
- *consistently choosing to hear and chant, year after year
- *gently and lovingly saying what we have to say
- *assisting each other to be regulated and clean
- *recognizing bad energy between us as poor service
- *taking up our beads to go to Krsna and work it out
- *being anxious to say we're sorry and humbly granting forgiveness as soon as possible
- *helping to heal each other's wounds
- *encouraging each other to blossom and reach our goals
- *wanting us to be happy and loved and growing nicely
- *caring together whether our various children are happy and loved and growing nicely
- *caring together that our other loved ones and our extended family of devotees are happy and loved and growing nicely
- *being concerned for our planetary family
- *focusing on our spiritual advancement
- *happily serving at our temple
- *supporting various devotee enterprises
- *finding we are truly provided with the things we need
- *knowing where the waves of love we experience come from
- *wanting to please Sri Sri Radha-Krsna
- *not being too attached
- *respecting each other's service
- *living to give rather than to get
- *relishing quiet time together
- *relishing quiet time alone
- *letting a fraction of the Divine Couple's love be visible in us
- *sheltering all who come our way
- *loving to serve the devotees

- *being peacemaker
- *sharing our love of Srila Prabhupada
- *sharing our mutual fervent longing to go Back to Godhead
- *being grateful for all the causeless mercy constantly showered on us
- *deeply cherishing the holy names
- *allowing the Supersoul to direct our lives
- *coming to understand why we were brought together
- *wanting to do more service, and do it better
- *being devoted to each other's feet with tears in our eyes

Thoughts from My Study of Nectar of Devotion

Bhakta Vic

Dallas, TX

Anyabilasita sunyam, jnana karmady anavrtam. *Anavrtam* means "uncovered." Pure devotional service is not covered by cultivation of knowledge or fruitive activity. It's not that knowledge or activity is completely absent, but they do not overshadow one's main focus on Krsna *bhakti*.

Then the interesting little word at the end of *karma*, or *adi*. *Adi* means etcetera. It specifically refers to things like mystic *yoga* and *varnasrama-dharma*.

This is pertinent to devotee relationships (including those between men and women). Relationships amongst the society of devotees must be *ady anavrtam*.

In other words, the most important thing about that person in a *sari*, white *dhori*, saffron *dhori* is that she or he is a devotee. For practical purpose, you might find it useful to also consider a person's role in *varnasrama*, but that must remain secondary and not overshadow the main fact that we're all devotees.

Parabdha karma and *nistha bhajana*. Of the six qualities of pure devotional service, two manifest in the stage of *sadhana-bhakti*. They are relief from all distress (*klesha-ghi*) and achievement of all auspicious qualities (*subha-da*).

Srila Rupa Gosvami describes that distress is caused by *karma*. He then very minutely categorizes four gradations of *karma*, from *kirtam* (the psychological disposition to sin) to *parabdha* (the fully manifested karmic reaction).

This too is pertinent to our social concerns between male and female devotees because *parabdha karma* in plain language means your birth. Srila Rupa Gosvami's main point is that engagement in devotional service destroys the effects of all *karma*, even

parabdha karma. Thus we hear that devotees are not to be considered by their birth or type of body—they are transcendental to such things.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura brilliantly elaborated on these points in his inspiring book *Madhurya Kadambini*. Therein he teaches that these wonderful effects of *sadhana-bhakti* gradually make themselves known and are fully manifest only when the *sadhaka* reaches *nistha*, or one hundred percent engagement in *sadhana-bhakti*.

We can learn a lesson on how to reform the less-than-Krsna-conscious aspects of our inter-genderal and inter-*asrama* relationships. We must strive for *nistha*. Chanting good rounds. Getting to *mangala-arati* on time, every day. Being alive during *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class. Yes, even the long-forgotten evening program. This is the real vanguard of our social reform. For only by achieving *nistha* will we truly be freed from all the conditioning of our birth and then we will be able to love another as devotees should.

And while you're on the way to *nistha*, take time to smile and be nice!

Are we the Body?

Stutya dasa

Alachua, FL

It's been years since we've first learned the basic principle of our philosophy. We are not the body.

Irregardless of the place of birth, natural tongue, or family situation we've all taken up the process of Krsna consciousness precisely because the philosophy given to us by Srila Prabhupada rang true.

Although we have practiced Krsna consciousness for several years, somehow or other we forget this from time to time. No, we are not the body. If we don't establish ourselves in this realization we may see others as their body.

"Devotees do not suffer from skin disease, black or white or red or whatever. In the material world black and white are opposites, but spiritually black and white are varieties. That is the proper vision." (Srila Prabhupada, letter 73-3-11)

Race differentiations have lead to wars, riots, family disputes and violent religious encounters the world over. It is important to safeguard our variegated devotee family from these idiocies by reminding ourselves that we are not the body, and recognize the common denominator between us. I have all too often seen devotees in

managerial positions criticizing others, sometimes using racial remarks.

In India, a Godbrother used to make awful remarks against Indians referring to them in a condescending, demeaning way. Even here in our friendly community there has been some racial criticism.

Perhaps we can check this attitude and conduct ourselves with respect and appreciation for those who are chanting the holy names of the Lord.

More Prabhupada Consciousness

Rasananda dasa
Mayapur, India

I sympathize with Dinadayadri's view expressed in *Priti-laksanam* Volume 3. I joined in 1969 and share her feelings about the diluted Prabhupada consciousness. Let all devotees small and big alike go into the streets for *kirtana* (more than a token amount).

But unlike her, I feel especially pained and apprehensive about the continued presence of the symptoms of this disease—even here in Mayapur. My lack of hope arises when I see those in leadership still failing to recognize the problem. It's not that I feel there is no hope, but I feel that failing some dramatic changes in attitude and actions that significant changes in important areas (position of women in ISKCON, etc.) will not occur.

My uneasiness with the situation in ISKCON is pushing me toward wanting to retire, to hear and chant and leave aside the problems I can't seem to change.

I understand *Priti-laksanam* is a forum for discussion on Vaisnava relationships. Prabhupada said, "Association is ninety percent of Krsna consciousness," and at another time, "always think *sankirtana*." Putting the two together I find "*sankirtana* is the basis of relationships." By taking part together in *sankirtana* we are working on reawakening our constitutional position as pure devotees of the Lord. This is the real platform of relationships.

There is no alternative than to come to the spiritual platform. Otherwise the danger of our relationships being material is too great.

New Hope

Raghubatha anudas
Hilo, Hawaii

The latest Ratha-yatra reunion of the second generation and the publication *As It Is* (being published by the newly formed Gurukula Alumni Foundation)

nicely represent a growing trend among the devotees throughout America. Devotees with a common bond (sometimes more nostalgic than devotional), are re-bonding. What exactly is brewing in these reunions may be considered unsubstantial to some. With the excitement and promise aside, their first reaction is one of concern.

Are such gatherings representing a new devotional commitment for service and *sadhana*? Are they just mundane social affairs or worse—illicit gatherings of sex and drugs? Are they a tired retreat to the past, or a final recognition of who we really are as Krsna's devotees represented by our shared past? Are they a regrouping of devotees or only the gathering of "nondevotees" and independents snubbing ISKCON—an affront to Srila Prabhupada's movement? Such reservations are often vaguely defined but ever present in some devotees reactions to these independent gatherings. Last minute diplomatic tolerance is sometimes offered, but generally the undertow of reservations remains. Few events better typify this than the LA Ratha-yatra reunions of the second generation and its publication of *ISKCON Youth Veterans*. (IYV)

These considerations are undoubtedly legitimate. However, they can also be an inappropriate distraction from the broader picture. These gatherings and partnerships are hopefully marking the dawn of a new era and the closing of the old one. As a Society, we have been through a murky transitional period of tumult and estrangement. Has that long cycle now finally begun to dissipate because of, or as a symptom of, these gatherings? Not to feel the relief and excitement of that possibility is to undermine this healing process.

Our last LA reunion has finally sidestepped most of the usual reservations because it translated into something substantial and practical in the minds of our seniors. We are therefore hearing raving reviews from many quarters how a working relationship has finally begun to blossom between the first and second generations. No one is happier for this new team effort than myself. It represents the culmination of the IYV's often lonely and resisted work of 4 years and a personal expense of over \$15,000. The Gurukula Alumni Foundation and Project Future Hope are therefore a rewarding confirmation of my efforts. Still, I offer a word of caution. We must guard ourselves from becoming too distracted

by the projects from the real reason for the success. That success is the process that allowed these projects to bud.

The greatest success is the process of healing ourselves and by it, healing our mutual differences. It is only what has been resolved from this dark period that represents our new found affiliations. For the ex-gurukulis, that maturity, was fueled by the honest, sincere communications offered through the ISKCON Youth Veterans newsletters. Our success is most importantly represented by the communication process.

ISKCON Youth Veterans was a forum of communication that placed the individual in the forefront. This approach finally soothed the second generation with a dawning of recognition of their issues and a forum that partially addressed them. Those issues were not simply about a harsh past, but just as often, an intriguing one of adventure and wonder. Nor was it solely about the yesterdays of their childhoods, but more often, their present struggles and triumphs as developing adults. IYV lent an interested ear to seemingly trivial details of their lives. It showed concern and extended sympathy for their struggles. It shared their accomplishments, honored their virtues and took note of their introspections.

Until then, the more common approach took some form of steam rolling people into programs that were repeatedly given precedence over the individual. It ended with everyone saying, "later pal." It's crucial to recognize this difference of approach; otherwise, the latest projects are prone to perpetuate the same tendencies. Partnerships like the Foundation will continue to grow to the degree it further resolves the causes of our original estrangement. This understanding will safeguard development and allow us to recognize the many others accomplishing this feat.

IYV newsletter also peeled away at a disquieting picture about ourselves as a Society. This recognition instilled an urgency and offered the breeding ground for remedies. The variety of issues uncovered and remedies offered is a book in itself. However, in general we can point to the state of denial by both generations. One party denied or belittled the hardships of the past; the other belittled its unique merits. It was a delicate balance of both attitudes that revealed an honest picture and fostered a common denominator.

We are now coming to terms with

our past. That also means coming to terms with each other. It is an acceptance that needs to be made as much as by the first generation as by the second. It is a process not entirely completed but well on its way. We have finally come to respect the second generation as legitimate devotees in their own right. Now they are moving on to define their rights as members of society both in and out of ISKCON. This is not always a smooth process, but it enhances their maturing sense of identity, potential and purpose as young men and women.

The varying degrees of recommitment to their old devotional values is nourishing and beginning to sprout once more. There remains reservations and differences. Yet, the second generation's return is still revitalizing ISKCON with a renewed sense of self perpetuation and a legitimacy as a community. Just as importantly, their very participation is automatically addressing a moral debt the movement has incurred with the second generation.

Resolving these issues for the youth veterans is helping to do so for others as well: women, parents, congregational members, and the coming wave of youth. These social variables are increasingly finding their place. With it, the over all social puzzle takes on a growing picture of a maturing society of devotees. In short, it is by process of self development or in other words, "self-realization," that we are cultivating ISKCON into a whole society. It is an intricate but fascinating evolution.

The dimensions of this process have tallied up to a magical formula for the youth veterans. This formula is one of respect for what they have been through and who they are today. They are again becoming an integral part of the devotee community, beginning with their old childhood comrades. The partnerships of Project Future Hope and the Gurukula Alumni Foundation best exemplifies this rather simple formula.

As long as this process of concern and communication continues, so will the number and development of projects. This is the most effective formula for revitalizing relations and projects throughout every sector of the ISKCON body. If they continue in this direction then they are truly a project of new hope for the future.

Ecstatic Women, Stand Back!
Kundali dasa

ISKCON Vrndavana

I have this conflict between by emotions and my conscience over what Srila Prabhupada would do about the now thorny question of where women should stand in the temple room—opposite the men or at the back.

Personally, I find that we have audacious, over-bearing, "Just-let-me-get-to-centerstage" types among both the men and the women in our Society. Somehow, out of my own gender consciousness, I find the men of that ilk easier to tolerate. Therefore, I'm all for the women being in the back. But I must admit this desire has nothing to do with what's right and just deep-down Krsna conscious.

At the same time something sticks in my throat when I read or hear devotees say Srila Prabhupada instituted this system of women to the back. I stand to be corrected by someone more in the know, but this is how I remember the history. Back in 1975 two *sannyasi* Godbrothers, both veterans of years of service in India, Gargamuni and Bhavananda, were sent to the West to preach. They came to New York, to the old bliss-filled Henry Street temple, and shortly thereafter they instituted the program of women in the back. As far as I know Srila Prabhupada had nothing whatsoever to do with the decision. From there the practice spread movementwide.

Now it is a fact that His Divine Grace may have passively accepted the new arrangement when he saw it already in place; especially when there was no groundswell of resistance from the women at that time. And thus someone may want to argue that Prabhupada's passive acceptance is tacit approval, and that that is as good as his direct order, which is tantamount to sastric injunction. In which case we really have nothing to discuss on this matter.

But even if this is the case or if in fact I have the history all wrong and His Divine Grace did indeed put this system in place, I believe someone else may still argue with equally telling force that His Divine Grace would have surely reconsidered this situation seeing the unrest it is causing among his daughters. What's more we have precedents for his reconsidering and adjusting or reversing certain kinds of decisions.

Is this my conscience speaking, or mere feelings, I'm not sure. Maybe I'm just trying to impress the women with my "liberal" attitude, although I can't see what good that would do me. What

I can honestly say though is that if my mother came to the temple I would love for her to see the Deities as closely as possible and hear and chant in *kirtan*. No two ways about it. But if she was to behave in any way that was not chaste, demure, low-key, in other words if she embarrassed me, I would definitely want her in the back. I might even prefer that she did not come at all.

Anyway, here in Vrndavana I see Indian women shoulder their way through the hordes of men to stand in the front and take *darsana* of the Deities or to be up front at Prabhupada's *puja* and somehow to me it seems fine. I have no problem with it at all. In fact sometimes I want to make the way for them, for I find their eagerness to see the Lord and His pure devotee inspiring.

But one thing they never, ever do, and this may be a defect in their devotional realization, I don't know for sure, but no matter how good the *kirtana* gets, how wild it may get, these women never, never start to boogie down in ecstatic trance of devotion in front of the men. Never. In fact, I have seen that when the *kirtana* gets wild they often move to the back or the side.

So, if and when the present system changes, I would like a sign posted in a prominent part of the *darsana* area in all our centers. The sign should read along these lines: "All women in uncontrollable ecstasy step to the back, please. Thank you." To make sure the sign has teeth, so to speak, we might even consider having a couple of women handy, with suitable builds, of course, to make sure their more ecstatic sisters move to the back.

Stuck in the Middle

Uddhava dasa
Wicklow, Ireland

I recently read with great interest in *Priti-laksanam*, Vol 4 Oct. '92 two essays, one by Muralivadaka dasa, the other by E. Burke Rochford. In these the dilemma of our devotee teenagers (second generation) was referred to. I found it very encouraging that there seems to be an acceptance on the part of some senior devotees (first generation) of their responsibility in creating this dilemma. This is manifest by their willingness to listen to the youngsters.

I would like to point out that there are also a vast amount of devotees in between (the middle generation). These are the many devotees who are not direct initiates of Srila Prabhupada (first generation) and who were not brought through the ISKCON *gurukula* system

(second generation).

For many of these devotees there is a feeling of being discarded. Unfortunately, it seems that as the middle generation has not been through any formal ISKCON training such as the *gurukula* system, no one feels that they are accountable for them. The middle generation is not responsible for creating many of the difficulties which which our Society is now faced, but when we pose questions like: Why is there so much confusion in the running of Srila Prabhupada's movement? Why is there very little co-operation? Why is personal ambition rampant? Why should we have absolute faith in an authority that's been proven again and again to be flawed? our input and suggestions are not appreciated.

It has to be recognized that after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance devotees in a position of authority took—and in some cases still do take—a position of absolute authority. When the infallible proved to be fallible it left the middle generation in a predicament.

This is not meant to be an exercise in airing gripes. What has happened is in one sense history. However, history should be a valuable learning experience and from my perspective lessons have gone unheeded.

I have yet to be convinced that we have fully faced up to the wrongdoings and this is manifest in the refusal to admit, confront and ultimately solve our problems.

In an article by Sri Rama dasa in BTG May/June '92 he describes the difference between the authoritarian and the authoritative parent.

"Authoritarian parents like to say 'Do it because I say so!' They often fight with their kids and motivate by threats and punishment. Authoritative parents set consistent, logical limits and are ready to enforce them, yet they spend time explaining reasons for the limits and teaching their children how to make good decisions on their own." The relationship between first generation and middle generation is in one sense parental. Sri Rama dasa explains how the authoritarian parent approach is undesirable and alienating. If, however, in honesty and frankness I ask any of the above questions about our movement I still detect an authoritarian attitude. A further point in this example of the "parental" relationship is that when the "offspring" reaches 16+ he should be treated as a friend, not a child.

The middle generation have legally to be 18 or older to join this movement.

I'm 33, in the movement 12 years and still waiting for authority figures to accept me as an adult and friend.

I'm part of a middle generation community which consists of 13 adults and 15 children. All the adults here have had the same experience and that is why we decided to form a community together, build a *gurukula*, grow vegetables, look after cows, open a *prasadam* cafe, etc. Of course, from the start we were aware that our similar negative experiences would not be enough to keep us together. Our similar negative material experience may have pushed us to listen to Srila Prabhupada and aspire to become devotees, but as we can see it is not keeping this worldwide movement together. What is needed is a level of honesty, straightforwardness, trust, and yes, love that we had never experienced before. In the three years our community has been together I feel we have successfully been developing and achieving these ideals. I feel an enthused member who belongs in this community. Is it too idealistic that devotees of all generations unite to push on this movement to which we all belong for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada and Krsna?

Chastity

14-year old Gurukula Student
North Carolina

During the past few years in ISKCON there has been a controversy about whether or not girls should cover their heads. Many of the original ISKCON schools have had all the girls cover their heads whether they were three years old or fourteen. But since then, devotees have discovered conversations, lectures and purports where Srila Prabhupada said things completely against what many people thought.

I am against young girls covering their heads. First of all, I think it's silly for girls younger than 12 to worry about being chaste. And second of all it's against Prabhupada's instructions.

Chastity for a woman has always been an important factor of Vedic culture. Srila Prabhupada says in a purport of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.31.41 "In the Hindu scriptures . . . woman's chastity and devotion to man is greatly emphasized." Chastity and devotion to man (or husband) means that a woman is properly covered in public, that she has no thoughts of some other man and that she is modest and shy. Srila Prabhupada said in a lecture 12/11/68 "In India, the girls . . . cover their head. That is the system of a married girl's shyness." So a girl shows her chastity to

her husband by being modest and shy around other men. As Mother Urmila said in an interview, "To be chaste a girl must be free of the consciousness of trying to attract men and show off her body. Therefore, she covers her head." But a girl who does not have a husband cannot be chaste to her husband therefore she should not cover her head.

In fact, Srila Prabhupada gives specific instructions that an unmarried girl should not cover her head. In a *Bhagavad-gita* lecture, 5-9-73, Srila Prabhupada said, "By woman's dress one will understand who she is. . . . Those who are not married will not have this veil. It must be open."

Therefore, from what Srila Prabhupada said about chastity and girls covering their heads, I think that we should not only allow the girls not to cover their heads but we should encourage them not to cover their heads.

RESPONSES TO ARTICLES IN PREVIOUS ISSUES

A Response to "Same-sex Pairing" Praghosa dasa Wicklow, Ireland

The title of this article in Volume 4 was misleading. You cannot have a homosexual relationship and also be Krsna conscious (just as you can't have an unbonafide heterosexual relationship and also be Krsna conscious). It is a contradiction in terms and one which is clearly not supported by Srila Prabhupada.

"Lord Brahma, approaching the Lord, addressed him thus, 'My Lord, protect me from these sinful demons, who were created by me under Your order. They are infuriated by an appetite for sex and have come to attack me.' " (*Bhag.* 3.20.26) In the purport, Srila Prabhupada writes, "It appears here that the homosexual appetite of males for each other is created in this episode of the creation of the demons by Brahma. In other words, the homosexual appetite of a man for another man is demoniac and is not for any sane male in the ordinary course of life."

As Srila Prabhupada said, these books are the lawbooks for the next 10,000 years. It would be a little unwise for us to try to alter them in any way, as they were only written 20 years ago. If we start to tinker with Prabhupada's teachings then where do we draw the

line? Perhaps someone might decide that they can't yet give up their attachment to beastiality. Well that's fair enough, but can they seriously expect devotees to endorse their activities?

If devotees did, it would simply be misplaced compassion. Prabhupada has explained that before we can show compassion we must first understand what real compassion is. Real compassion isn't determined by what the social and cultural pressures of the day are.

Rasamanjari Prabhu stated that no one has the right to bar us from Lord Caitanya's mercy. Of course, we can bar ourselves from Lord Caitanya's mercy. And we do that by breaking the rules and regulations given to us by our spiritual master. It should be understood that a far more serious transgression is justifying our noncompliance—in some cases changing the conclusion of the *sastras*.

Rasamanjari Prabhu also suggests that the social decay is only going to get worse as Kali-yuga progresses. How then are we to understand the emergence of a golden age? Devotees who are here to help implement the golden age, cannot become consumed by seemingly pressing social issues to the extent of wanting to change what Prabhupada has so clearly laid down for us. If so, we will not see the emergence of the golden age, but an ever-increasing hodge-podge that will not solve the problems of life.

Finally, there is no question of hating or condemning anyone. Those struggling to serve Kṛṣṇa must be careful to make a clear distinction between the sins and the sinners and then we all have the duty to unhesitatingly condemn the sins.

A response to "Same-sex Pairing"

Anonymous

My sympathy was aroused for those devotees who have suffered due to their circumstances of being, shall we say "from the other side of the fence." I contemplated for a long time how to reply to this serious situation.

You are right to say that even a duly married couple who break Vaisnava restrictions on sex life are sinful. Srila Prabhupada writes very clearly in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, "Illicit sex even within marriage is considered prostitution."

Unless we become purified of our perverted sex desire then how will we gain entrance into Vaikuntha or Kṛṣṇa-

loka? We will be forced instead to take birth again carried by the desires of the impure subtle body. We have all taken birth due to being afflicted with lust, which is a disease. By Kṛṣṇa's grace, one can purify the enemy lust by following the principles of religion under the direction of His pure representatives. Yes, it is possible. Many, many Vaisnavas live controlled lives without giving in to illicit sexual desires.

If I have contracted some disease of the body or mind due to my own past sins, no matter what I do or say, I am not in a healthy condition; I'm diseased. I must either be cured of my disease or take a new, healthy body. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* explains clearly that homosexuality is in fact an inauspicious situation. Nowhere has it ever been accepted as common practice within the *Vedas* and it is excepted on this planet generally by others in the same unhealthy condition. It is so unhealthy and dangerous that the sexually active are now spreading a dreaded virus all over. This is not a criticism of those dear devotees who happen to be in this situation.

According to Bhismadeva, argument must be overcome by factual ascertainment, and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* clearly states that homosexuality is an unhealthy way of life. It is an affliction and must be cured through the excellent medicinal treatment of hearing and chanting the holy names of God, eating Kṛṣṇa *prasadam*, and serving carefully under the direction of purified souls in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We must fight to regain our pure consciousness and pure lifestyle as eternal servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

If we are not becoming purified of sex desire on all its varied levels of perversity then we are not following our *sadhana* properly nor listening to the Lord in the heart. We must immediately search our innermost self and find out what is wrong, unless we want to sign off and wait for our next material body.

To be gay or lesbian is a particular temporary designation. It is not permanent or eternal in any way; it is the modes of nature acting upon the body. One should pray, exercise control, follow *sadhana-bhakti* carefully, never eat foods cooked in unclean places like nondevotee restaurants, and get counseling with other devotees who can help.

Any person who is attracted to devotional service is to be honored. The

pure soul is a lover of God without material contaminations, and one who follows the perfect process of *bhakti-yoga* under the guidance of a pure devotee is guaranteed to develop their pure consciousness and drop all foreign designations. Such is the power of devotional service.

A Response to Jack Maurice's "Creating Economic Unity"

Jagatkarta dasa
Galena, MO

Had Mr. Maurice restricted his essay to a description of marketing plans or desires for business cooperation between devotees, comments would most likely be unnecessary. However, in several statements, Mr. Maurice implies that it is wealth and opulence which will be the crucial factor in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As if without immense wealth Lord Caitanya's desire for delivering Kṛṣṇa consciousness worldwide would be impossible. Historically this idea cannot be substantiated. We have only to look at Srila Prabhupada's life to see what are the real qualities and essential elements required for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Srila Prabhupada came to the United States with only seven dollars and a trunk of *Bhagavatams* and yet succeeded in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness beyond anyone's dream and expectation. And of course, he accomplished this within only 12 years. "Purity is the force." By the force of his purity and the purity of the vibration he carried to us, Srila Prabhupada did what no wealthy person or so-called influential person could ever do.

In describing the qualifications necessary to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Srila Prabhupada often quoted a text from *Caitanya-caritamṛta Antya-lila* 7.11: "The fundamental religious system in the age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the *sankirtana* movement." While wealth may certainly be used to further Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we should not be under the mistaken conception that wealth is the criterion for propagating the *sankirtana* movement. Rather, out of kindness, Kṛṣṇa allows us to offer Him some paltry bit of opulence for His service to save us from falling prey to *maya*, enjoying it for our own sense gratification.

If we follow in the footsteps of the stalwart *acaryas* like Srila Prabhupada, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, the six Goswamis of

Vrndavana and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, we may also become empowered to spread Krsna consciousness. These personalities have no other business but to spread God consciousness and yet have not recommended business enterprises as the process to accomplish this. The actual program they recommend and the *sastra* recommends is to simply chant the holy name of the Lord offenselessly and preach the science of Krsna consciousness. Therefore if we are actually serious about spreading Krsna consciousness, our efforts should be channeled in this way. There are thousands of businessmen and thousands of wealthy men in the world already, why waste our time repeating their mistakes? Why not become purified and with spiritual potency impress them with Krsna consciousness? Then they will gladly offer their hard-earned wealth to Krsna. This will save them and will simultaneously save us.

The objection may be raised that *grhasthas* have a difficult time becoming purified while having to work for *karmis* in jobs requiring questionable association and activity. And without purification where is the question of preaching? The answer is that we have to learn to be satisfied with the bare necessities of life. By living simply on a piece of land one can meet the needs of the family by cultivating the land and protecting the cow. This will give the *grhastha* his independence from hellish association and simultaneously give him free time to cultivate Krsna consciousness, which is a benefit not generally available to the businessman. This simple program will also please Srila Prabhupada who often encouraged it among his disciples.

While it is certainly a fact that nothing which can be used for spreading Krsna consciousness should be rejected, *nirbandha krsna-sambandhe yuktam vairagyam ucyate* (Brs 1.2.256), we should also recognize that this principle does not encourage us to desire wealth to be used "for" Krsna. We can see from the example of Srila Rupa Gosvami, who is quoted here, that he was greatly renounced. But when wealth and opulence came to him, by Krsna's arrangement, he used it for Krsna, such as when he built the Govindaji temple. In cultivating the pure devotional platform, there is a difference between desiring Krsna's service and desiring material facilities "for" Krsna service. In the first case the devotee is desiring to serve Krsna however and with whatever Krsna may

provide and his aim is only to please Krsna. In the latter case, the devotee is desiring certain facilities which he may feel are essential to his Krsna consciousness.

However, in the position of *para-bhakti*, transcendental loving service, we can remain fully engaged in devotional service in any condition. *Ahaituky apratihata yayatma suprasidati*. (Bhag. 1.2.6) In this pure devotional service the devotee is competent to be fully empowered by the Lord to impress Krsna consciousness into the hearts of the conditioned souls. He becomes an empowered preacher of the Lord. It is Srila Prabhupada's desire and the desire of all the previous *acaryas* that we come to that perfectional platform and thus spread Krsna consciousness as they have.

A Response to "Sadhana Bhakti: Where's the Sadhana?"

Nandini dasi
Tempe, AZ

The "fallen" devotee doesn't come to *Bhagavatam* class. He can't wake up early or do any service. These days in ISKCON we're hearing a lot about these "fallen" devotees and how small the temples are becoming as a result of this laziness. The fallen devotees also bloop and become fringies, holding down *karmi* jobs to support their family life. It is true that the number of devotees is becoming smaller all the time and the numbers of those who attend the morning and evening programs is also decreasing. It is indeed a grave challenge to the future of ISKCON.

However, the real challenge is how we, as temple leaders, deal with those who seem to be losing their enthusiasm. Some leaders follow a staunch *sadhana* and preaching schedule. Some are householders who maintain such a rigorous pace that they even put the *brahmacharis* to shame. For them it may be hard to understand the devotees who "miss all the nectar." You preach constantly, but still no cooperation. The whole show rests on your shoulders—and what a burden it becomes.

It is now commonplace to see a devotee slipping who served faithfully for a decade or more. People who have surrendered their life and soul to Krsna consciousness can't wake up early to chant anymore. People who once hoped and prayed they would never leave are now living miles from our temples and can no longer make it over for the *kirtana*. Transition, attrition of leaders,

financial problems, devastating court cases—these are symptoms of stress that engulf the whole movement, not just the "fallen" or the "lazy" among us. Rather than criticize, we must extend a helping hand. Through love, understanding, and genuine friendship, we must earn the trust of those who are absent from the class. It is never a mistake to say "I'm sorry" or to extend ourselves to others.

For ISKCON to survive we must create a bond of caring and respect among all levels of Vaisnavas. If we find fault with those who don't live up to our expectations, we may find ourselves with very few friends. If we feel we are superior to the "fallen" devotees, soon the morning program will be full of those we feel are on our own level. It will be only you and the Deity.

In Response to "Sadhana-bhakti: Where's the Sadhana?"

Anonymous

Your article on the importance of *sadhana-bhakti* was well written. Thank you for bringing this vital issue into focus. Of all the articles in this latest issue of *Priti-laksanam*, I was most inspired by yours, as the performance of proper *sadhana* really is the crux of all issues. Yes, it would be of great help to have a regular column on the subject so all devotees would feel enlivened and encouraged to continue with their commitment to daily *sadhana-bhakti*.

I've also had the experience of visiting a temple of 70 devotees where only a few residents came to *mangala-arati*. Perhaps it was an unusual day? It wasn't. One devotee, with a shrug of the shoulders explained it was normal day. Where have all the devotees gone? Is 40 too old to keep getting up at 4:00 am? Are we just too exhausted from working long hours supporting our families to continue our morning program? Have we somehow allowed those overwhelming modes of nature via TV and video overshadow our evenings so that we can't even begin to try to peel ourselves out of the sack at 4:00 am? What is happening?

It's not easy to get up every day for the morning program, plus get the children up and hold a full time job; but it is possible.

In certain circumstances, Srila Prabhupada would give permission for his disciples to come to Guru-puja and Deity Greeting, although Srila Prabhupada was generally very insistent that his disciples attend *mangala-arati*,

would say.

At one time, Srila Prabhupada started issuing fines for devotees who missed *mangala-arati* and the morning program; they had to sell 1 Krsna Book for each *mangala-arati* missed. The devotees were humored by Srila Prabhupada's idea, but we all knew His Divine Grace was very, very serious about each and every one of his disciples attending the morning and evening programs in his ISKCON temples.

Our daily *sadhana* of attending *mangala-arati*, chanting 16 rounds of attentive *japa*, trying carefully to avoid the 10 offenses and hearing the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* every day are required practices for every initiated devotee as requested by Srila Prabhupada, our founder-*acarya*. And these basic Vaisnava standards are continued to be upheld by many of his disciples in their different stations, to whom we are most grateful. I had heard that Srila Prabhupada predicted that at least 50% of his disciples would leave him when he passed away, and of the 50% who continued to follow his orders, of chanting 16 rounds of *japa* daily, following the regulative principles, and favorably cultivating devotional service, most would become *bhajanandis*, with only a few taking up the task of the *gosthyandis*. Does anyone remember this and did Srila Prabhupada say anything further in this regard?

Srila Prabhupada would emphasize that the leaders in ISKCON must ensure that all the devotees under their care were chanting their rounds, rising early, following the regulative principles, and hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, along with their regular duties and that these essential daily practices of *sadhana-bhakti* would keep his disciples secure in Krsna consciousness. Srila Prabhupada once commented that his only criticism of his disciples was that, "They are not afraid enough of *maya*!"

A strong morning program will help us to overcome the aggravations and major distractions of the material world and facilitate our making tangible, progressive advancement on the path of *bhakti-yoga*.

Srila Prabhupada would often say that the morning program starts the night before, so of course it helps to get enough rest. It also helps considerably to pray to Lord Balarama, the giver of all strength, to help one maintain early morning *sadhana*, or, to revive it once again, whatever the case may be. We are all in this together. At times we are strong and other times not so strong, but we all want to help and encourage each other. We are closer than kin; we are eternally related

with each other through our initiation within the Brahma Madhva-Gaudiya *sampradaya*, unless we ourselves break our link.

With love and admiration we look to those steady souls who are fixed. Let us compassionately encourage those who are trying to revive their morning program and *sadhana*. This attempt is wonderful for amidst so many millions of materialists, atheists and demons, one may find a devotee of Lord Krsna or His representatives, and such a great soul is very rare.

The Life of Sri Gangamata Gosvami Acarya in our Sampradaya

Within the present state of Bengal lies what was once the kingdom of Sri Naresh Narayana. King Naresh Narayana had a daughter named Saci. From early childhood, Saci was a topmost devotee of the Lord. Within a short time, Saci began her education. At first she absorbed herself in grammar and poetry, but having become expert in these, she gradually became completely immersed in endlessly studying the scriptures. Even as a young girl, she was always fascinated with Krsna consciousness. As Saci came of age, all the young boys were charmed by her beauty. But within Saci's mind there was not the least attraction for any of the young men, no matter how handsome or rich they were. Her mind was always filled with thoughts of Madana Gopala.

Sri Naresh Narayana began to think of arranging for his daughter's marriage. Upon understanding her father's intentions, Saci told him, "I will not marry a mortal man born of this world of death." The king and queen wanted to make arrangements to give Saci's hand in marriage. But Saci did not want to be wed. Always regretting their failure to arrange for their daughter's wedding, in due course of time, the king and queen grew old and passed away.

After the passing of the king and queen, the royal succession fell to Saci. Saci accepted the responsibilities of governing the kingdom. One day, on the plea of seeing more of the kingdom Saci left to visit the holy places of pilgrimage, after appointing some relatives to govern in her place. Although she wandered here and there, nowhere could her heart find satisfaction. She decided to seek out a bona fide spiritual master. After much travel,

she arrived in Jagannatha Puri. One day, after taking *darsana* of the Jagannatha deities, she received an inner message and was inspired to go to Vrndavana.

With this Saci felt that the moon of her good fortune had arisen. In Vrndavana, she chanced to meet Haridasa Pandita, whose single-minded devotion to Gauranga and Nityananda was unsurpassed. Upon seeing the spiritual power and austerity of his divine form, Saci became filled with ecstasy. After meditating deeply for several days, Haridasa Pandita gave Saci shelter. Sri Saci fell at the lotus feet of Haridasa Pandita with her eyes pouring tears and prayed for his mercy.

The *Caitanya-caritamrta* gives Haridasa Pandita's perceptorial ancestry as follows, "Ananta Acarya was a disciple of Gadadhara Pandita. His body was always overwhelmed by the ecstasy of Krsna *prema*. He was magnanimous and advanced in all respects. Ananta Acarya was a reservoir of all good qualities. No one can estimate how great he was. Pandita Haridasa was his beloved disciple."

In order to examine Saci's qualifications as a disciple, Haridasa Pandita said, "It is not possible for the daughter of a king to go to Vrndavana and live as a poor devotee constantly absorbed in *bhajana* with little to eat and no comforts. It will be better for you to stay at home and worship than to go to Vrndavana."

Sri Sacidevi could understand what all this talk was for. She paid no attention to all these words of discouragement. With fierce determination, renunciation and austerity, she went on with her *bhajana*, and her service to her *guru*. As she absorbed herself in her austere service, step by step she renounced her opulent dresses and fine ornaments.

One day, Haridasa Pandita Gosvami said to Sacidevi: "If you like, giving up all pride and fear, you may wander throughout Vraja and practice begging from place to place as a renounced devotee. You have my blessings." Upon hearing the words of her Gurudeva, Saci's joy knew no bounds. Thereafter, freed from all false ego, her body covered with only rags, she went house to house in Vrndavana, begging alms in the fashion of a bumblebee who takes only a little pollen from each flower. In this way, she showed the intense renunciation and austerity of a highly advanced devotee. All the devotees in Vrndavana were astonished by her severe renun-

were astonished by her severe renunciation.

Gradually, Saci's body became frail and weak. She grew thin, and was covered with soot. Still, she took no notice of her condition, and continued following her austere regimen. Physically exhausted from her diligent service she would sleep on the banks of the Yamuna, and then rise again the next day to cleanse the Lord's temple. She would regularly circumambulate some holy places, see the *arati* of the Deity and listen to lectures on *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Seeing her intense renunciation, Haridasa Pandita Gosvami's heart was filled with pity. His mercy toward her increased. Smiling, he called Sacidevi and said to her, "You are a princess, and yet you have made such an intense effort to worship Kṛṣṇa. Seeing your renunciation and austerity in the cause of devotion I have become supremely happy. Soon I shall give you initiation into the *mantra*."

Haridasa Pandita had one disciple named Sri Laksmipriya, toward whom he was very affectionate. Just at that time she arrived in Vrndavana. Sri Laksmipriya used to chant three hundred thousand names of Kṛṣṇa daily. When she arrived, Haridasa Pandita sent her to live near where Sacidevi performed her daily *bhajana* on the banks of the Radha *kunda*. Taking the order of her *guru* on her head, Laksmipriya went to the Radha *kunda* to be with Sacidevi and help her with her *bhajana*. Every day Sacidevi and Laksmipriya would circumambulate Govardhana Hill. In this way, in the company of Laksmipriya, Saci continued her worship of Kṛṣṇa with great determination, living on the banks of the Radha *kunda* until one day Haridasa Pandita called for her to return. He instructed her to quickly return to Jagannatha Puri, to continue with her *bhajana* and to preach what she had learned of Sri Caitanya's teachings. At that time almost all of Caitanya Mahaprabhu's personal associates had gone back to Godhead, and had entered into their eternal, unmanifest pastimes.

Sri Sacidevi left Vrndavana and returned to Jagannatha Puri. On the order of her Gurudeva, she went to the house where Sarvabhauma Pandita once stayed. There she engaged in *bhajana* and began giving classes on the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The old house of Sarvabhauma was dilapidated and crumbling. For a long time no one had lived there. No one remained there to

worship the Damodara *salagram* that had once been worshiped by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya himself. Sacidevi established first-class worship of the *salagram* according to the traditional rules and regulations of the *sastra*. In order to hear her wonderful siddhantic interpretations of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, faithful devotees would come to Sarvabhauma's house day after day. In a short time her *Bhagavatam* classes became very famous, and people would come from miles around just to hear her.

One day, the king of Jagannatha Puri, Mukunda Deva, came to hear the *Bhagavatam* from Sacidevi. Hearing her original explanations of *siddhanta*, the king was completely astounded. He thought to himself that he would like to make a nice offering to Sacidevi out of appreciation of her devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

That night he had a wonderful dream. Lord Jagannatha came to him in his dream and ordered him, "Offer Sacidevi a place on the banks of the Ganges." The following day King Mukunda Deva went to Sacidevi. With great humility, Sacidevi offered the king a sitting place and asked him the reason for his visit. King Mukunda Deva explained about the vision he received from Jagannatha and how the Lord had instructed him to construct a place by the Ganges for Sacidevi. Sri Sacidevi was not disposed to accept any sort of wealth or comfortable situation and wanted to refuse. But the king kept pressing his wishes again and again. At that time, not wanting to violate Lord Jagannatha's order, King Mukunda Deva issued a decree naming a holy *ghat* by the side of the white Ganges after Sri Sacidevi.

The decree said, "Let it be known that Sri Sacidevi was a princess who left everything to come to Jagannatha Puri and preach the holy gospel of Sri Caitanya."

As the day of Mahavaruni-snana approached Sri Sacidevi wanted to go to the Ganges to bathe. But Sacidevi's Gurudeva had forbidden her ever to leave Jagannatha Puri. Remembering the order of her Gurudeva, Sacidevi gave up her desire to bathe in the Ganges. That night, Jagannatha came to her in a dream and said, "Saci, don't think like that. On the day when Varuni will take bath that day you must go and bathe in the white Ganges. Gangadevi has been praying for your association. So you must go to the white Ganges."

Having had such a divine vision from Jagannatha, Sacidevi was very

joyful. The day of Varuni-snana came. In the middle of the night, Sacidevi went to the white Ganges to bathe. As she bathed at Sveta Ganga, the current of Gangadevi picked her up and began moving along. The waters of the Ganges overflowed the pond, and the current ran before her in a flood until she arrived at the Jagannatha *mandira*. Seeing this, thousands and thousands of the *dhamavasis* in Jagannatha Puri became ecstatic and took their bath in the Ganges. The four directions were filled with prayers that were shouted in great ecstasy, and there was a huge commotion. Everyone bathed in the Ganges in the midst of great jubilation.

Hearing the commotion the guards at the gate of the Jagannatha temple awoke. They were speechless, and hearing a great noise they went inside the temple. They began talking loudly amongst themselves. Hearing all the noise, the king had also awakened. Anxious to see that everything was all right, the king ordered the gates to the temple opened. At this, the gates were opened. By some miracle, Sacidevi was standing there, alone, inside the temple of Jagannatha. The servants and *pujaris* of Jagannatha concluded that she must be a thief who had come to steal the valuable ornaments of Jagannatha. Many people said, "This cannot be! There must be some mystery here." Immediately Sacidevi was imprisoned in the dungeons to stand trial for theft. Sacidevi's mind, however, did not become weak or confused. While imprisoned, she absorbed herself in chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

Late that night, King Mukunda Deva saw Lord Jagannatha in a dream. Jagannatha angrily told him, "Immediately release Sacidevi from your dungeons. It was because I wanted to personally arrange for washing her holy feet that I had the Ganges bring her to My temple. If you want your life to be auspicious, then you had better make the *pandas* and *pujaris* bow at her feet and pray for forgiveness. You yourself must take initiation from her.

Seeing this in his dream, the king was repentant, and right after taking his bath, he had the *pandas* and *pujaris* go to the place where Sacidevi was being held and immediately release her, falling at her feet and begging for forgiveness. They went there and paid full obeisances, falling down like rods before her feet. The king himself went before Sacidevi and with great entreaties begged her to forgive him for his offenses at the holy feet of a devotee. At

that time, he told Sacidevi of how Lord Jagannatha had ordered him to accept her as his *guru* and take *mantra* initiation from her.

Understanding all these things to be the pastimes of Lord Jagannatha, Sacidevi became extremely joyful, her heart filled with divine love for Krsna. Placing her hand on the king's head, she gave him her blessings. Soon after this, on the order of Jagannatha, on an auspicious day, Sri Sacidevi initiated Mukunda Deva into the eighteen syllable Radha-Krsna *mantra*. Along with the king, many *pujaris* also took shelter of her on that day. From that day forward, Sri Sacidevi was known as Gangamata Gosvamini.

One day a *smarta-brahmana* named Mahidhara Sharma had come to the banks of the Sveta-Ganga to worship his ancestors. Having heard the glories of Gangamata Gosvamini, he was eager to have *darsana* of her holy feet. After showing great respect to the *pandita*,

Sri Gangamata Gosvamini offered him a place to sit. She asked him what his purpose in coming was. The *brahmana pandita* explained the righteous reason for his coming. Seeing his genuine earnestness and piety, Sri Gangamata Gosvamini explained the *siddhanta* of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to the *brahmana*. The *brahmana-pandita* was astonished by her explanations of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and dived and surfaced in the nectar of her ambrosial words. After this, the *pandita-brahmana* asked to take shelter at the lotus feet of Gangamata Gosvamini. On an auspicious day she initiated him into the Radha-Krsna *mantra* of ten syllables.

Mahidhara Sharma's birthplace is Dhananyaja-pura. On the order of Gangamata Gosvamini, he preached the message of *nama-prema*, and the teachings of Gaura-Nityananda throughout Bengal. ○

Notable Quote

"There are some highly qualified persons who accept only the good qualities of others. Just as a bee is always interested in the honey in the flower and does not consider the thorns and colors, highly qualified persons, who are uncommon, accept only the good qualities of others, not considering the bad qualities, whereas the common men can judge what are good qualities and what are bad qualities.

"Among the uncommonly good souls there are still gradations, and the best soul is one who accepts an insignificant asset of a person and magnifies that good quality." (*Bhag.* 4.4.12, purport)

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