

Priti-laksanam

A Forum for Vaishnava Discussion

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

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In the service of
His Divine Grace

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A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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Dear Readers,

At the very first Centennial meeting in North America that I am aware of, on Balarama's Appearance Day in New Dwaraka in 1991, there was an *istagosthi* called by Lokanath Maharaja to see what the devotees thought about having a big Srila Prabhupada celebration. The devotees wanted to glorify Srila Prabhupada, but they also wanted to know what would happen after the Centennial was over. Would things in ISKCON change for the better? Would they feel more a part of the society?

Lokanath Maharaja, a transcendental optimist, said that with whatever energy that we got from the Centennial year, we would just carry it further. Well, actually to some degree that has happened. There were many things that were successful about the Centennial. One of the areas that Lokanath Maharaja and others called into action was Project Unity, an endeavor to bring back as many devotees as possible who had gone through the temple *ashrama* system and left during the 60s, 70s, and 80s—to show them that they had a place in the Hare Krishna Movement, or in ISKCON.

As the Centennial year drew nearer, despite Lokanath Swami's personal desire, as well as other members of his team, to emphasize social issues, the ISKCON leadership placed the main emphasis on building memorials and having events, which were very nice. I don't

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want to detract anything from them. But somehow it would appear that the devotees, who were estranged for whatever reason, were not given as much consideration as Lokanath Maharaja and others had hoped. It occurs to me that, since the Centennial has now passed, the most important effort we could make is to bring about "The Era of The Vaishnava." After all, the true monuments to Srila Prabhupada of consequence are, in fact, the devotees, themselves.

These beautiful building projects completed for the Centennial, such as Srila Prabhupada's *samadhis*, are lasting testimony to the greatness of our spiritual master. But people judge us, not by how we build our buildings, but by how we build our society of devotees. Lokanath Maharaja and others, like Bhakti-Tirtha Swami, also feel that the devotees should be the focus of attention.

I feel that, at least as far as the individual devotees are concerned, our society has not established a genuine basis of income and employment for its members—and this would be a good place to start.

Somewhere back in the early to mid 80s, the contract Srila Prabhupada had made to the devotees—that if they dedicate their lives to ISKCON, they'll be taken care of—was broken, at least in North America and some other parts of the ISKCON world.

Many of the devotees who took up book bags and distributed Srila Prabhupada's books during ISKCON's rapid development in the 70's were women. After the temples no longer wanted to maintain most of the temple residents, many of these women, now with their children, had to seek public assistance—which is now being cut back by the US government. Many other members had to leave the society, or spend most of their time working for non-devotees in order to support their families. Some struggled to pay *gurukula* bills as

our educational system faltered in meeting their needs.

Believing that the devotees are the most important monument to Srila Prabhupada's mercy, I feel that we need The Era of the Devotee so that our leaders give the highest priority to educating children and to developing a financial base by which the parents—a willing work force—can be engaged appropriately.

I don't want to limit ourselves to the traditional methods of book and *prasadam* distribution, and fund raising. Of course, these things must be done, but there have to be many more innovative ways of doing them that are suitable. Plus there can be spin-off cottage industries or other ways that devotees can make a decent living in Krishna consciousness. Many of the devotees from the 70s are now in their forties and fifties and have difficulty envisioning themselves standing on street corners. That is one reason why book distribution has fallen off—not that the books or *prasadam* are unpopular. In other parts of the world, younger devotees are experiencing the same result we had during the rise of ISKCON in North America back in the 70s. Are there more ways to do these family businesses that are more in keeping with the abilities and needs of middle aged devotees today?

Let's not think that the problems the Vaishnavas have experienced in North America are limited to North America. I've had feedback that most of the same social problems we've had here are being repeated in Europe and elsewhere. You can't build a society without paying attention to the details of that society, especially the day-to-day lives of its people. Just read what Bhakti-Tirtha Swami has to say about this on page 30 if you want to hear some persuasion!

Does talking about building an economic basis to our society mean that all the *sannyasis* have to get MBAs and quit

their spiritual activities?

No. It means that our leaders should create and fund a forum where devotees who are already entrepreneurs can come together, pool their ideas and resources, and help generate some structure for an economic basis that will involve those who need and want to work in the association of Vaishnavas in devotee-appropriate enterprises.

This is just a suggestion. I'm not taking space now for details, but would love to hear back from readers with good ideas. Also, as Lokanath Swami says in his contribution on page 33, there is going to be a social-economic development meeting in Vrindavana this Kartika to explore this question, and more.

I'm not calling for a rebellion, I just hope that the leaders will seriously empower the best people to get things happening to help families support themselves in Krishna consciousness. I suggest that *Priti* readers contact their local authorities or GBC and let them know how important it is to come up with the solutions to these kinds of problems. After all, the devotees are the monuments of consequence. If anyone wants to further this discussion, please call me, or write with your views.

Your servant,
Sarva-satya Dasa

Dear Readers,

I want to respond to some of the letters here to illustrate the necessity for encouragement, and understanding in one's devotional service.

The first involves Vivisvan Prabhu. In the last issue he stated his belief that the temple president's role should be delegated exclusively to men. Perhaps in countries where it is deemed culturally unacceptable to have women running things, such as India and Middle Eastern countries, this may be true. But we see that Srila Prabhupada, in order to

facilitate preaching, did adjust rules according to time and circumstances. For example, he began initiating women.

So I think that the fact that Alachua has a *mataji* temple president is fine. After observing many TP's during my life in the movement, I have come to the conclusion that she is doing an excellent job. So, she should be encouraged.

The second involves Trivikrama Swami and his response to Bhakti Ananda Goswami. I think that one may dispute how it is that ISKCON children came to be in *gurukula*, but there is no dispute that his child was abused. So, would it not have been more sensitive to be compassionate to his situation, rather than blame him for trying to "take a knife to ISKCON's throat," and then blame him for his child's abuse? This is the behavior by some leaders that eventually drives away devotees. Better that we take a humble position, and try to do the best to encourage all the devotees in their Krishna consciousness.

Your servant,
Krsna Avatara Dasa

LETTERS

Ron Porterfield
Berkeley, CA, USA

I just returned from a half year in Sri Vrindavana. I do not know how you knew to send me a *Priti-laksanam* there. I was amazed one day to receive my copy last March. In my opinion you should leave out long writings on philosophical topics like *varnashrama* system of society. My God! There are so many books to read on these topics from a philosophical point of view. *Priti-laksanam* should be human interest, which we never (barely ever) see. I always skim over those long multi-page articles. Also, it would be good to include every author's address so we could respond to any article we read. So

many times I would have sent a letter to someone about their story!

We include an address with submissions when the writer requests it. — Editor

Sounding off on Betrayal of the Spirit

**Sankirtana Dasa
Moundsville, WV, USA**

I recently read Nandini Dasi's book. It's in the local libraries. Some devotees may not like the treatment, but this again is a much needed lesson. Devotees want the eyes of the world to be upon them, and when they are, we're wondering why. So the movement has to see the type of impression it's making on the public. We are living in a fantasy if we expect them just to see the good things. Every organization has its difficulties. People are aware of that. I think they will respect us more if they see that the movement is dealing with issues in an open and constructive way.

**Lalita-Gopinatha Dasi
Durbuy, Belgium**

I read Nandini's *Betrayal of the Spirit* (before it had reached Europe). I notice that in the last issue of *Priti* you mentioned that, if there was any place in which she should advertise her book, *Priti* was it. I agree.

I have been somewhat shocked at the reaction to her book by some devotees (especially in America). Have some devotees still not advanced beyond the fanatical stage of "This is outrageous! Blah, blah" self righteous attitude? Is not what she says true? Are some devotees still in the denial stage and not acknowledging our past? I think we should grow up and accept what has happened and move on. I think it is better that she wrote what she did instead of some sensationalist

journalism which we saw in *Monkey on a Stick*. I think the latter book is much more damaging!

Another reaction, and one more shocking, is the name-calling and mud-slinging which I have read. If this is the reaction of other devotees, as well, then they are only confirming what many (ex-ISKCON) devotees think of us. Either way, these two reactions are just another form of fanaticism. Please be realistic and give it up! For your Krishna conscious sake and ours.

I would like to suggest that if some devotees have such thoughts about books being written on ISKCON, then stop complaining about what HAS been written and write something yourself; maybe *Ten Years Later* or something to that effect. Many wonderful things have taken place within our society and continue to do so. If we concentrate on that, we will eventually let go of our negative attitudes. Holding on to the past (or complaining about it) is not showing the rest of the world (and devotees who feel betrayed and have left) that we now have a society which has (and is) learning from its mistakes.

As for her "betrayal," it cannot be said that Srila Prabhupada betrayed her, so why betray Srila Prabhupada by leaving the movement? Or at least not venturing to come back on a more permanent basis? I really hope that those devotees like Nandini can come to the understanding that ISKCON is not what it was 10 years ago, but has matured immensely and is still going forward. Devotees, young and old, should willingly accept these devotees back. In fact we should work on it! Many are not so much bitter as they are disappointed.

In one temple, for the first Prabhupada Reunion held some years ago, many devotees who had left were very surprised that ISKCON had changed so much since the 1980s. They even admitted they were afraid to come

back in case it hadn't changed. Now we see each year familiar faces returning at every reunion. Maybe they are not "full time" devotees, but one can see that Srila Prabhupada is reaching into their hearts, and just maybe they will eventually make the decision to return to his lotus feet under the ISKCON banner.

So instead of being derogatory towards devotees such as Nandini, we should point out our views (positive and negative) in a mature manner. When we see that a devotee may feel negative, we should try and encourage that devotee, and not put more bricks in an already half-built wall between them and ourselves.

By writing this, I am not endorsing the book, as it can potentially have a damaging effect on ISKCON's preaching efforts in the US and elsewhere. I am simply pointing out that maybe by our reactions we are confirming what she has written about us being self righteous and in denial.

**Nandini Dasi
Mesa, AZ, USA**

What reviewers are NOT saying about *Betrayal of the Spirit*:

"After reading *Betrayal of the Spirit*, this reviewer has concluded that ISKCON is a dangerous cult." —No Reporter, No Staff Writer, Anywhere, USA

What reviewers ARE saying about *Betrayal of the Spirit*:

"*Betrayal* offers a fascinating glimpse at how even the most spiritual groups can fall prey to human failings." —Bill Peschel, *Boston Herald*

"This is a highly significant work for scholars and students of new religious movements. . . . Highly recommended." —L.H. Mamiya, Vassar College, for Choice, Current Reviews for Academic Libraries

"Muster's book is an important testimony that might be instructive to those

involved in the leadership of any religious movement." —*Publisher's Weekly*

"Nori Muster's balanced critique gives many helpful insights for those seeking a better understanding of the structure and nature of religious cult groups at the fringe of society." —*Nexus*, Colorado's Holistic Journal

"Muster's continued faith in the value of a life of devotion and service—despite her disillusionment—testifies to the powerful appeal of the ideals that led her to the Krishna movement." —*Yoga Journal*

**Response to Rupanuga Prabhu
Trivikrama Swami
Krakow, Poland**

My contention is that Rupanuga Prabhu is failing to be a transparent medium for Srila Prabhupada when he claims that "If one cannot find a bona fide guru to accept *diksa* from, he can still accept Srila Prabhupada as his *siksa* guru," and thus be connected to the *parampara*—and when he states that Srila Prabhupada's purports "are indeed *darshan* or going to the guru."

Srila Prabhupada was asked this very question by Madhudvisa Prabhu on a morning walk in Melbourne, May 21, 75:

Madhudvisa: ". . . cannot become a medical practitioner simply by studying books. He must study under a medical practitioner. So in the case of your books, is it possible to become a devotee without actually having personal association with you? Just by reading your books?"

Srila Prabhupada: "No, it is not that you have to associate with the author. But one who knows, if you cannot understand, you have to take lessons from him. Not necessarily that you have to have contact with the author always."

Devotee 1: "Just like the text books are not written by the teachers, they're written by other professors."

Devotee 2: "Usually you do not meet the author."

Srila Prabhupada: "Simply someone who knows the subject matter, he can explain."

Madhudvisa: "But can your, would your purports serve as explanation besides."

Srila Prabhupada: "No, no, anyone who knows the subject matter, he will be able to explain. Not necessarily the author is required to be present there. (break) . . . to study from a medical man, I never said you had to study from the author. Or one who understands the author's purpose. Just like we are explaining *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. Not that one has to learn directly from Krishna. One who has understood Krishna, from him that is *parampara* system."

In our line the triple authority of *guru*, *sadhu*, and *sastra* are required. The *sastra* is the foundation, as we say "books are the basis," but they are passive. The *guru* and *sadhu* however, can and do, take the initiative. They awaken us actively out of our ignorance and oblige us to turn our face towards Krishna.

As Srila Prabhupada says: "One should not proudly think that one can understand transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books. One must become the servant of a Vaishnava. As Narottama dasa Thakur has confirmed, *chadiya vaisnava-seva nistara payeche keba*, "one cannot be in the transcendental position unless one very faithfully serves a pure Vaishnava. One must accept a Vaishnavaguru (*adau guru-asrayam*), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Krishna is. That is called the *parampara* system." (C.C. Antya 7.53 purport)

Nandarani: "If we distribute your books and *prasada*, that is as good as them coming to meet you personally."

Srila Prabhupada: No, personally, also, you can do." (Con.w. S.P. vol. 25, p. 201)

Srila Prabhupada: "Therefore he has to accept spiritual master to guide him, just like simply by reading books you do not become educated. You go to school and read before the teacher. Then you'll understand. You cannot become medical man by purchasing books from the market place and reading at home." (Con. w. S.P. vol. 25, p. 318)

While discussing the Vedic scriptures, Srila Prabhupada states, "To hear and to explain them is more important than reading them. One can assimilate the knowledge of the revealed scriptures only by hearing and explaining." (S.B. 1.1.6. purport)

I do agree with Rupanuga Prabhu when he makes the point that Srila Prabhupada is *siksa guru* for all of us and when he says we should have "great faith in his words" and "accept his teachings as infallible."

In the next conversation, Srila Prabhupada explains his teachings on the vital issue of accepting a spiritual master. These clear teachings should never be minimized nor should an attempt be made to circumvent them.

Srila Prabhupada: "There is no devotion unless you go to a guru. Forget it. *Adau gurvasrayam*. First thing is, first business, is to accept a bona fide guru. Otherwise there is no devotion. It is simply false imitation. This is the injunction of Rupa Goswami in *Bhakti-rasamrta sindhu*. *Adau gururasrayam*: Your first business is to approach bona fide guru and take his *asraya*. Otherwise there is no devotion. That has been the defect in the modern society. They imagine. This business should be given up. He must follow. *Sadhu-marganugamanam*, which is prescribed by the *sadhu*, *guru*, you have to accept that. You cannot manufacture your own way."

"If you are actually hankering after Krishna—Krishna is within yourself—He will give you a guru. He will give you a guru. If I am unfortunate, I'll not get a guru. Otherwise why Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, *guru-krsna-krpaya paya bhakti-lata-bija? Mali hana se bija kariya aropana*. In this way you'll find in the *Caitanya-caritamrta*. So even Caitanya Mahaprabhu, He accepted guru, Isvara Puri. He is Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna Himself. So how you will get the ultimate goal of life without accepting guru? Why do you manufacture this idea? There is no need of manufacturing this. You have to follow. *Mahajano yena gatah sa panthah*. If you manufacture, then you'll be cheated. Don't do this. That has become a fashion, that you manufactured your own way of service. That is not possible. Therefore Rupa Goswami stresses, *adau-gururasrayam*: The first business is that you must find out a bona fide guru." (SP lect. Bhubanesvar, January 23, 77)

Does all this mean that Srila Prabhupada's disciples who are initiating should claim to be, or should see themselves on an equal level with Srila Prabhupada? No, of course not. The difference between a regular guru and a great *acharya* like Srila Prabhupada is mentioned in our "law book" the *Nectar of Devotion* (p. 53). However, Srila Prabhupada did want his disciples to become initiating spiritual masters.

"Now, this spiritual masters succession is not very difficult. Of course, my students, they offer me so much respect, but all these respects are due to my spiritual master. I am nothing. I am just like peon. Just like peon delivers one letter. He is not responsible for what is written in that letter. He simply delivers. But a peon's duty is that he must sincerely carry out the order of the postmaster and deliver the letter to the proper person. Similarly, this *parampara* system is like that. Every

one of us should become a spiritual master because the world is blazing fire. So all my students present here who are feeling so much obliged . . . I am also obliged to them because they are helping me in this missionary work. At the same time, I shall request them all to become spiritual master. Every one of you should be spiritual master next. And what is their duty? Whatever you are hearing from me, whatever you are learning from me, you have to distribute the same in total without any addition or alteration. Then all of you become the spiritual master. That is the science of becoming spiritual master. To become a spiritual master is not very wonderful thing. Simply one has to become sincere soul." (SP lect. Hamburg, Sept. 3, 1969)

Unfortunately some of those who took the service of initiating after Srila Prabhupada's departure tried to imitate Srila Prabhupada instead of following in his foot steps. Thus they created havoc in their own lives and the lives of their followers. However, we shouldn't react to this history by changing our philosophy. This is like throwing out the baby with the bath water. No, we should act as faithful servants of Srila Prabhupada and in a humble way take this burden of accepting disciples for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada. Thus we will be saved from the pitfalls of self aggrandizement by Srila Prabhupada's mercy.

How can anyone say, "You cannot get to Srila Prabhupada except through me." Srila Prabhupada has over 70 of his disciples initiating. Can we possibly think that none of them are sincere in representing Srila Prabhupada? As Rupanuga Prabhu once told me personally in 1968: "When the disciple is ready, the spiritual master will be present." That was true then, as it is today.

I challenge Rupanuga Prabhu to produce one quotation from anywhere in Srila Prabhupada's books or in any of

the books in our *sampradaya* that state that one can connect to the *parampara* by reading. Sorry, Rupanuga but you won't find one because they don't exist. Therefore, I say this is your manufactured concoction, and although you may say so many good things, it will all be spoiled because of your deviation on this most important principle.

Responses to Trivikrama Swami's Letter to Bhakti Ananda Goswami

Arya Dasi

Parksville, BC, Canada

I very much enjoyed the editor and co-editor columns in the May issue. The exchanges between devotees may sometimes seem grueling, but family life often is. Open dialogue certainly does uproot *anarthas* and stirs things up. There's an expression shared by parents of young children which may be applicable to the phenomenon of *Priti*, "from chaos comes order," meaning that which we may perceive as a mess is actually an important part of the learning and growing process.

I commend you for the way you placed Trivikrama Swami and Rupanuga Prabhu's letters to one another side-by-side in the same issue. It created a dynamic momentum which was thought provoking.

I'm concerned that our readers are tired of hearing from me, but none the less I'll take that risk by submitting some feedback regarding Trivikrama Swami and Bhakti Ananda Goswami's exchange.

Trivikrama Swami's reply to Bhakti Ananda Goswami really touched a nerve. With all due respect to the revered swami, may I suggest that the early initiates of Srila Prabhupada considered ISKCON to be nothing less than a Godsend personally headed up by the deva-like Vaikuntha man Srila Prabhupada—certainly never a convenient organization

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to pass the blame onto, as suggested.

Those of us who didn't start a family until the early 80's have indeed taken full responsibility for the protection of our kids, as most of us learned well from the experience of our Godsisters and Godbrothers who tread that path before us. Their sacrifices forewarned the next wave of devotee parents of otherwise unforeseen perils. To those many Prabhus, including Bhakti Ananda Goswami, we owe a very deep debt of gratitude, and pray that knowing this may offer some form of solace to parents grieving a loss.

Mallika Dasi
Alachua, FL, USA

Dear Trivikrama Swami,

To quote you, "It's sad that . . . shifting the blame . . . is a handy way to deal with . . . a case of classic denial . . ."

Sad indeed. This is exactly what ISKCON members have had to endure for decades now. Denial from those who acted and denial from those who were in a position to stop the acts!

We did what we were asked to do (send our children off to distant *gurukulas* because we were told it was Srila Prabhupada's desire. Our desire was to please him and do the needful to help spread this movement. I found your response very cold and impersonal. It's time to give compassion and love, not cruel words that hurt. Bhakti Ananda Goswami represents HUNDREDS of devotees, Maharaja. Please leave your comfort zone of denial and be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Please reach out and give love and compassion. Give what Srila Prabhupada gave us, genuine caring for the suffering in this material world.

Ramachandra Dasa
Badger, CA, USA

Dear Trivikrama Swami,

This is the second time in some years

that I have heard a response such as yours. A *mataji* in LA some years ago was speaking to my wife, saying that Srila Prabhupada had made a mistake in establishing the *gurukula* system—because of all the things that were happening to the children, it was Swamiji's fault. Now, in *Priti-laksanam*, I'm hearing you criticize Bhakti Ananda Swami because of how he feels. You, Trivikrama Swami, as well as the *mataji* who blamed Srila Prabhupada for attempting to develop a *gurukula ashrama* system, refuse to put the blame where it belongs—on the rascals who were doing the molesting and on their direct superiors who should have been watching more closely.

It is obvious you do not have any children in the movement for you to speak so coldly. I think you owe Bhakti Ananda Goswami an apology. People in the movement are at fault for molestation taking place, and every leader in the movement DOES bear a fraction of the responsibility—accept it or not—just as the president of the US bears a percentage of all sinful activities performed in the nation. Bhakti Ananda Goswami gave his children to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness for protection, so that, as they grew, they would have spiritual awareness of Sri Krishna. Instead, what did they get? Some demon in the guise of a Vaishnava stealing the future of these young boys and girls.

Bhakti Ananda Goswami
Oregon, USA

First I would like to express my gratitude to *Priti-laksanam* for continuing to provide a forum for devotees to reveal their hearts in confidence. Srila Prabhupada's extended family may not currently reside in corporate ISKCON, but not because they are doctrinally or morally deviant. These devotees think of themselves as belonging to "Prabhupada's ISKCON." By inviting all

of Srila Prabhupada's family to dialogue in its pages, *Priti-laksanam* is performing an important service.

Regarding my letter about child abuse and Trivikrama Swami's response, my criticism is offered as a service out of love. I have never publicly criticized ISKCON. I have served in the movement since 1972 and I never said or did anything to defame Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON. My efforts to reform ISKCON and end abuses were to no avail, so I withdrew and served anonymously from a distance. The letter Trivikrama Swami responded to was originally a confidential letter I sent to *Priti*'s editors and later gave them permission to print. It was not written to publicly attack ISKCON, so it is unfortunate that Trivikrama Swami has taken it that way.

The point is, they are KRISHNA'S children who were abused.

Many devotee parents were given direct instructions to place their children in *gurukulas* where they suffered abuse and neglect under various leaders in ISKCON. The parents were sent far away to serve the mission and were not able to maintain communication with their children. I have to wonder if Trivikrama Swami ever experienced this. He says that I was the person responsible for my children's protection, and he is correct. But many of us were told by our ISKCON authorities that surrendering our children was the supreme test of our faith in God and guru—and it was!

When I learned of neglect and abuse I did try to change things, but I was treated like a bloated devotee, a disobedient back-slider. I had to leave my service to rescue my children and I had to move out of the *ashrama* to provide separate housing for them. Like so many parents, I allowed the ISKCON organization to take my children and now the organization does not want to take re-

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sponsibility for what happened. My letter represents the suffering, disappointments, and hopes of many devotees who have become alienated from corporate ISKCON.

I'm not saying Trivikrama Swami is an abuser, but his response has elements of abusers' typical reactions to confrontation by a victim. Typically, abusers guilt-trip, blame, belittle, insult, and intimidate their victims. They apologize to get sympathy and then heap guilt and shame on the victims. Trivikrama Swami needs to seriously study the body of clinical literature on battered wife syndrome and child abuse and stop using these classic defenses against the victims who dare to speak-up. He attempts to absolve the organization of any responsibility for what we suffered. He tries to guilt-trip me and then attacks my manhood ("Be 'man' enough . . .")

Authorities should be man enough to take criticism and tolerate differences of opinion without making snide remarks about hurt devotees who are attempting (after years of intimidation) to express their hearts and be constructive about how to improve ISKCON. He includes those buzz-words "offenses" and "reactions" typically spoken by abusive authorities. Why should I (or anyone) fear "reactions" for speaking out? Why should I be threatened with "reactions" for expressing my concern over problems in ISKCON which have grievously influenced the lives of hundreds of sincere, humble devotees? It is not fault finding to expose criminal activity. Parents surrendered control of their children to ISKCON authorities and were betrayed.

There are real saints in the leadership of corporate ISKCON. Authentic spiritual leadership gentles and enables others, it does not generate a climate of fear and intimidation in which power is gained and preserved.

How "sober" and "constructive" is it

to blame the victim for the abuse? My call for penitential renunciation, reorganization and a constitution (which will protect the rights of devotees), is not taking "a knife to ISKCON's throat," as Maharaja has characterized. Since when is the call for a reorganization with constitution the same as a brutal act of murder? [Srila Prabhupada instructed the GBC to create an ISKCON constitution spelling out rights and responsibilities. The GBC has assigned a committee to work on it. — Editor]

I suggested that the World Vaishnava Association (WVA) and ISKCON should perform their own service in a spirit of transcendental devotional service competition as friends, not enemies. To say I painted "ISKCON black" and to infer that I suggest the WVA is a competitor against Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON is a misunderstanding. No one thinks the WVA should replace ISKCON, but they should be appreciated and encouraged. The WVA has an inclusive spirit, while the GBC has had an exclusive attitude.

I was approached at last year's Rathayatra in San Francisco and told that ISKCON did not want any unauthorized preachers to talk to the public attending Rathayatra. How does it serve Gaurānitai for hundreds of devotees to stay away from festivals because they have been told they are not welcome by ISKCON authorities? It is the driving away, the abuse of power, the bullying and threats by people in authority that offends God and guru and makes our movement look like a dangerous cult run by ego-maniacs. So certain preachers are being banned. Can we say the same about all the abusers?

Many devotees would agree that ISKCON's health is certainly improving, but it is far from well. How can ISKCON be healthy with no *varnashrama-dharma*, with severe nuclear family problems, a first generation of devotee children who have often

been uneducated, abused, and neglected, an appalling record of oppression of women, and a large number of followers who fled as a necessity of survival?

I'm sending this into *Priti-laksanam* because so many devotees insisted that I respond to Trivikrama Swami's letter. Since I have suffered physical assault, threats and defamation from ISKCON fanatics before, I wonder if Maharaja realizes the danger he may have put me in? I can only pray that he does not speak for all ISKCON gurus and GBC, and I call on all ISKCON leaders to carefully avoid misrepresentation, character assassination, shunning, banning and black-listing. Protection should be given to all devotees who report abuses, regardless of their present ISKCON affiliation (or lack of it).

Sometimes a great, opulent, high-tech ship needs to accept the service of a little tug boat to get it safely through a dangerous narrow passage. Corporate ISKCON should accept a group of humble little tug boats trying to help it through a dangerous, difficult time. Our desire is the success of ISKCON's mission. We don't want to see it become a wreckage on the rocks of history. We see danger in the waters. Perhaps together we can navigate through treacherous water and bring the great ISKCON Flagship of our Gaudiya Devotional Armada back to home, safely in the harbor of the Holy Name!

Response to Vivasvan Dasa Tivrabhakti Dasa Phoenix, AZ, USA

When I first joined ISKCON in Atlanta, the temple president (not the present TP) was a tyrant and incompetent. I could no longer tolerate him, so I left. I was then delivered into the arms of another devotee leader who was also a power hungry control freak. I had to exit that intolerable situation, as well. Was Miami any better? Well for some time it

was, until it became intolerable for me to live under the jurisdiction of one of the temple presidents there. When I departed for India, I could not see myself returning to the same situation. As far as I was concerned, there was no home to go back to. Even when I was in Hawaii, the temple management there was incompetent. It was then I decided that I could no longer live in a temple and be happy.

At the Miami temple I did *pujari* service with mostly women devotees. Many of the men did not want to do Deity service. So I should point out to Vivasvan Dasa that, according to *sastra*, women are not allowed on the altar, either. I can also recall when I did my Bhakti Sastri Degree program. I'm sure it was one of the few in North America at the time, and Jadurani Dasi was the instructor. So was I not to receive instruction from her, just because of her gender, and I was a *brahmachari*?

I realize that in certain situations discretion may be advised in terms of putting women in certain positions because it would cause too much disturbance culturally. For example, it would not be appropriate to have a woman in certain positions in the temples in India, just as Haridas Thakur would not enter the Jagannatha temple. However, in the West, apparent rules and regulations are not as much followed just for the sake of rules and regulations. The emphasis in the West (placed by Srila Prabhupada) has been to facilitate the propagation of Krishna consciousness. This is the legacy of Srila Prabhupada, and Vivasvan Dasa should remember this as he is chanting his daily 16 rounds (and not 64 rounds).

What it breaks down to is, who is ready, willing, and able to get the job done? I do not know Nanda Dasi, therefore please send her my regards and best wishes. Tell her I said "GO, GIRL!"

**Comment on "To Whom Much Is Given, Part 2" by Rupanuga Dasa Mahalaksmi Dasi
Badger, CA, USA**

I generally agree with the philosophical points brought out by Rupanuga Prabhu in his articles. But I would humbly contest one statement, in Priti Vol. 20: "It is a misconception to expect that Srila Prabhupada knew or should have known everything in all his disciples' hearts"

It is certainly my feelings, has always been, and will always be, that Srila Prabhupada knows my heart. I would like to recount one appearance of my Gurudeva, in a dream, in 1985. I was living in a room behind the "dinner program house" in L.A. I had three children, was pregnant with a fourth, had just moved to L.A. from Puerto Rico—our eighth move in about five years—and my husband was just getting involved in an unpleasant chemical dependency in addition. I cried myself to sleep one night, crying to Srila Prabhupada, "I'm so tired, I'm so tired." I fell asleep sitting on the floor in the bathroom, since we only had the one room, and there wasn't anywhere else to go to get away from the children for a few minutes.

I dreamed I was chanting *gayatri*, and on the second line, which is meditation on guru, Srila Prabhupada stood before me in the center of a huge lotus flower. He said, "I was tired and I worked for you."

The Bhagavatam states: "*agnau gurav atmani ca, sarva bhutesv adhoksajam, bhutaih sva dhamabih pased, apravistam pravistavat*. One should realize that in the fire, in the spiritual master, in one's self, and in all living entities—in all circumstances and conditions—the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Visnu, has simultaneously entered and not entered. He is situated externally and internally as the full controller of everything." (SB 7.12.15)

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The disciple should feel, "The spiritual master always knows my heart, because Supersoul can tell him at any moment."

Certainly it is wrong to think that Srila Prabhupada sanctioned mischievous persons to be in authority positions knowing they would exploit others. I feel rather he knew that each one of us has free choice at every moment, and he simply tried to find men to do the jobs, knowing full well that our hearts were (and often still are) full of all dirty things—desire for power, sensual enjoyment, etc. But he hoped our higher natures would predominate. Collectively, I see that this is what is happening now in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. By the strength of Srila Prabhupada's blessings and presence, our spiritual natures are growing and developing a much purer society.

ARTICLES & ESSAYS

Good-bye Bala Gopal Krsna-devata Dasi Vancouver, Canada

(Reprinted with permission from the *gurukuli* newsletter *Nava Yauvanam*)

How can we ever know when we look upon someone that it will be the last?

I was around the house in Vancouver for a short time in September during a transition from Saranagati Farm to New Dwarka Temple in Los Angeles. He had just come back from training in Scotland and was starting his final year of high school. It was that hectic and busy time that most families go through when the kids are back from being away during the summer, and are trying to re-establish some routine before school starts.

We were both so absorbed in our busy lives that we neglected to spend much time with one another. I remember him walking me to the bus stop once when it was dark. He wanted me to be safe. We

talked and laughed as I waited for my bus. I did not think, that autumn evening, that it may be the last time I'd see my little brother's smiling face. He was already off to school the morning I left for Los Angeles. Neither of us had realized the night before that we had to say good-bye.

Bala joined cadets at 12 years of age to the surprise of the rest of the family. He was just a little boy with a sweet smile and curly hair; they didn't even have a uniform small enough for him. But he grew and matured quickly and received awards like Best Cadet and Unsung Hero at every one of his annual inspections. He became the top ranking cadet in his core by the age of 16. Most don't achieve this status until the age of 18 or 19.

Gopal became the top cadet in Western Canada, when he received the top score in the province on his Gold Star Examination. He was one of 10 cadets to be chosen to participate in an intensive training program in Canada's capital, Ottawa, and then in Scotland. He was planning to attend Canada's Royal Military College after he graduated from high school.

With an upbringing in *gurukula*, many devotees were shocked to see Bala Gopal pursue such a path. However, he took with him the valuable lessons he had learned in his early life. He was not merely a fighter, but rather a commander, a warrior, and a protector. He studied the history of battles. He was heavily involved in martial arts, and was aware of the spirituality and peace of mind required to become an effective warrior.

At the age of 17 he commanded respect from those in his core, his friends in and outside school, his teachers, authorities, and especially from his family. Gopal received this kind of respect because he himself was able to be humble, respectful, and warm. For example, he

reminded his girlfriend of the importance of hugging her mother every time she left the house. This reminded me of the deep respect that young princes like the Pandavas and even Lord Rama showered upon their own mothers. His strong sense of duty and morality along with the characteristics that he exhibited at the young age of 17 made me think of him as a prince.

On the evening of November 21, 1996, Bala Gopal exhibited all of these qualities with less than a moment's warning. He and his girlfriend, Samantha, were walking along the railroad tracks in a suburban part of Vancouver. The tracks had no fences surrounding them, making them a frequently used shortcut for many people.

My brother and his girlfriend were confident that they would be able to hear the loud noise and vibrations that a freight train makes as it gets close. They were walking and singing, and Gopal told Samantha how much he loved her. They were planning a life together; she was going to move to Ontario with him when he went away for military college. However, they were not prepared to be listening for the newly installed commuter train that ran along the same tracks.

The commuter train was built for speed, and only hummed as it swept along the tracks. Although the train blew its whistle at most of the intersections along its route through greater Vancouver, a "no-whistle-by-law" in this particular suburb prevented the train from doing so as it approached the intersection closest to the couple.

As the train swiftly advanced towards Gopal and Samantha, the train's engineer was occupied with making sure he had clearance from other trains. It wasn't until he was very close to the two that he saw their figures in the dark evening. The engineer blew the whistle and pulled the emergency brakes.

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Samantha said that she felt the wind of the train rush up beneath her and then she felt the strong hand of my brother shove her. He made a decision in a split second. The wind that swept along with the train swept Bala Gopal's soul away from his body as quickly as the train had come upon them.

When I heard the news that evening, I couldn't believe my ears. I can still hear the voice of my mother on the other end of the phone telling me that my brother had been killed that evening. I was quickly surrounded by the love and support of my wonderful friends in Los Angeles. However, I felt no comfort. They accompanied me to the temple room for evening *bhajans*.

It wasn't until I stood helplessly in front of the divine forms of Rukmini-Dwarkadish that I could surrender myself to the pain of what had just happened. I walked up to the altar so that I could see Them better through the tears that had suddenly filled my eyes. My knees buckled as they fell to the floor. I leaned against the altar with my elbows, and I sobbed into my palms as I was overwhelmed with bewilderment. I wondered how we could ever forget such beautiful spiritual forms. How can we spend so much of our day concerning ourselves with petty things? What is the meaning of all this misery?

We go about our lives so unaware of death, and even unaware of life or what it really means. I couldn't understand it. But amidst all the confusion, I had more clarity of thought than ever before. I realized then, away from the support of my family, that the only thing I could take shelter of was the mercy of Radha and Krishna.

An ecstatic *kirtana* ensued until late in the evening, and transformed what had started off as sorrowful confusion into the most joyous feeling that I had ever felt. I knew that Krishna was taking care of me and that He must be

taking care of my little brother.

I take great comfort in knowing that Krishna never forgets His devotees. I know that Krishna had a personal hand in what has happened to my brother. On a material level, he couldn't have had a more glorious death. He was on the front cover of the newspapers for three days as a hero and a devotee of Lord Krishna. It is rare to speak to someone in Vancouver who has not heard of my brother and his last act of bravery. He must be a great soul to have touched so many lives.

There were hundreds of people at Gopal's funeral service, all honoring *prasadam* and listening to the chanting of the Holy Names and recitation of the *Bhagavad-gita*. Many who weren't devotees then are now reading the *Gita* and asking many questions about Krishna consciousness. And those who are devotees are finding their faith strengthened by remembering Bala Gopal. It is amazing to me that he is doing such excellent preaching even after having left his body.

Still I was worried. I couldn't know what he was thinking at the time of death. I knew that I had to depend on Krishna to take care of him, and take Gopal to wherever he needed to go. But then I was given comfort on a spiritual level.

The morning after the funeral service and cremation, Mother Harirani called my family from Eugene, Oregon. She has been taking care of an installed Srila Prabhupada *murti* for over 14 years, but has rarely had him appear to her in a dream. The evening of the funeral, she lit a candle for Bala Gopal, asking Srila Prabhupada to take care of him. When she took rest, she had an amazingly vivid dream. Srila Prabhupada appeared to her. She told him about Gopal. Srila Prabhupada began to cry. He looked at her and assured her that Bala Gopal was okay. He would take personal care of my little brother and promised that he would go back to Godhead. After hearing about

this dream, I felt peaceful and happy, knowing that he is in the care of our beloved spiritual master, and will soon be at the lotus feet of Lord Krishna and Srimati Radharani.

Shortly after my brother's death, I had a dream that Narada Muni came in disguise to make sure that my mother was okay. And again recently, I had a dream of my brother at the age of four, dressed in saffron and shaved up beside Srila Prabhupada in the Vancouver temple room. Srila Prabhupada had a huge grin on his face and was excitedly running with Gopal towards the front of the temple room, towards Radha-Madana-Mohana. Bala Gopal looked towards me with a smiling expression that let me know he was having the time of his after-life.

I know that Krishna is taking care of my brother, but knowing that he is taking care of me is a more difficult realization. The night I found out about my brother's death was the closest that I have ever come to actually feeling my personal relationship with Krishna. But even now, with time having gone by since I felt so close to the lotus feet of the Lord, when I want a lap to cry on and I feel like no one is there, it is difficult for me to be surrendered enough to think of Krishna and the shelter that He gives us all.

On the night of November 21, I couldn't understand why it takes such losses to make us think about our eternal relationship with God. Even now the understanding that I gained that evening has been dulled beneath the petty things that I concern myself with from day-to-day. Already I am thinking about my goals in this life, forgetting the ultimate purpose. I must constantly remind myself amidst the pain, sorrow, and confusion that surrounds me every day. I am trying to remember the lessons that my brother has taught me during his life and with his departure. I

must use the talents and capabilities that were given to me by Krishna in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His eternal consort. I must be aware of my strengths and persevere without pride in order to conquer my weaknesses. And I must strive to develop the exemplary qualities that my brother exhibited in his life, so that I may better serve my Vaishnava communities.

Protect Krishna's Youngest Devotees Jahnavi Dasi Alachua, FL, USA

I am a former *gurukuli* with a four-year-old son who I want to grow up with happy childhood memories in Krishna consciousness.

I am also a representative of Children of Krishna, Inc., whose main mission is to support and further the educational, economic, emotional, and spiritual advancement of all Krishna's children. Children of Krishna, Inc. is helping to facilitate the development of Child Protection Teams in conjunction with the International Office of Child Protection, directed by Murlivadaka Dasa.

Dedicated, sincere devotees are anxious to develop a system that will make our schools, *ashramas*, and communities safe places of learning and worship for our most vulnerable members—our children.

Although a 1990 GBC resolution mandates that all temples have a Child Protection Team, the moral, legal, and ethical duty to protect our children demands much more of our society. In North America there is now the Office of Child Protection. Contact numbers for Europe and other parts of the world will be posted in future announcements.

Our three goals are: to have professional, functioning, uniform Child Protection Teams (CPTs) in every temple; to educate members on prevention, proce-

dures, and guidelines; and to educate the students in our society's schools about abuse.

Having these goals in place will empower the parents, teachers, and children, and help deter would-be abusers. We all should understand that abuse can be anywhere, even within religious communities.

Being such a serious and sensitive issue, many concerns may arise. Here are some commonly asked questions with some answers:

Q. What is the role of the CPT?

A. US law requires anyone having knowledge of alleged child abuse to report it to legal authorities, who can then pursue a criminal investigation if the case warrants it. CPTs are not vested with legal powers like the courts and police. Their job is to be an independent clearing house of information, to screen information as far as possible, and to pass along appropriate information to appropriate authorities. Once the legal system kicks in, what happens to the accused is out of the CPT's and ISKCON's hands. The CPT should then keep confidences in such a way as is necessary to protect any innocent party involved.

In a nutshell, the procedure is to hear the accuser's story, verify the concerns, and then help the alleged victim give the information to the proper authorities. The CPT is responsible for knowing the local police numbers, hotline numbers, and local laws. The team is there to be a responsible information and support system for all its community members.

If someone comes to a temple community with a criminal record of child abuse, temple authorities need to know about it. If children are taught how to detect and avoid abuse, less crimes will occur. Having proactive systems in place to prevent and investigate potential abuse is one of the best ways for schools, temples, and ISKCON to reduce the risk of legal liability.

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Q. Why do we need a Central Office of Child Protection, and why does there need to be a central ISKCON database?

A. Many devotees travel to different temples. It is therefore important to establish a comprehensive source of information. Local authorities may need to know if someone in their community has been convicted of child abuse, to address legal issues, or see how other teams have handled certain situations. The Central Office should have the names and phone numbers of local CPT members, as well as legal and other community resources.

Q. What about confidentiality? Children, adults, and families can be further harmed should sensitive information be spread around unnecessarily or prematurely.

A. Confidentiality is essential for the central office and local CPTs to function properly, especially with unresolved cases. It is imperative to avoid pitting devotees against each other, without further harming a victim or an innocent adult, or jeopardizing a legal case.

Q. We do not have any children in our community. Why do we need a Child Protection Team?

A. First, is it a GBC resolution that every ISKCON temple have a Child Protection Team, no exceptions.

Second, at any time guests may bring their children to your temple. The moment a child is on temple property, the temple bears some responsibility should an incident occur.

CPTs are like inexpensive, effective insurance. Creating an atmosphere where there is informed vigilance makes it hard for abusers to hide at an ISKCON temple, even one that has no children. ISKCON should be the most difficult place for child abusers to operate.

We invite devotees interested in this field and willing to learn more about child abuse prevention to please get involved.

Jahnavi Dasi

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The Perilous Path of Adolescence: How Parents Can Help

**Sakuntala Dasi
Houston, Texas**

As a family counselor and mother of a preteen I spend a lot of time thinking about the effects of modern culture on teenagers. The goal of parenting has always been to release the grown child into the world. But the world is a more dangerous place than it was when we parents grew up. In those days, western society, although materialistic, still exerted boundaries of propriety and morality. There were fewer avenues for kids to go wrong. Most of us have not experienced the degrading atmosphere in which our children may attend school now. We may not know what dangers, both subtle and gross, our kids face daily. Kali Yuga has advanced rapidly. Now the culture is hostile to family stability and a hazard to child development. The role of parent requires sheltering our children from this onslaught and arming our teens to survive it. How can we arm our teens to safely navigate these perilous waters?

As devotees, our first priority is, of course, engaging our children in the processes of devotional service: chanting the holy names of Krishna, attending temple programs and learning scripture, and rendering service. If we ourselves follow the principles of spiritual life and avoid meat eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling, then we can sincerely expect our children to do the same. In that way we can be authentic role models and avoid the parental hy-

pocrisy of "do as I say not as I do."

Other suggestions for arming our teens to survive the adolescent material world come directly from teenagers I have counseled. They have taught me two things that we parents can do to support our kids. First, listen to them. You don't have to agree, but try to hear what it is they are saying. The only way to know what kids are thinking, feeling, and experiencing, is to hear from the source. Actually listen to their words without mentally composing your response while they are speaking. Commonly we parents think we know what our kids will say before they open their mouth. We believe we don't have to listen because we think we already know. So when our kids say that we don't listen, they are right! Kids (and adults) feel respected and open up more when they are listened to.

The second suggestion I hear from kids is "Accept me for who I am." Sometimes it is hard to appreciate our kids' unique character because we hold a mental concept of how they should be. They are not what we expected, or they are not like we were. It seems they are not smart enough, friendly enough, humble enough, assertive enough, or polite enough, etc. Often these expectations stem from a comparison to ourselves. But although their bodies are expansions from our bodies; they are not clones of us. They are individual spirit souls. It is possible to overlook our kids' unique attributes if we focus on their shortcomings. Our kids' self concepts are a reflection of how we see them. If we appreciate their strengths as well as weaknesses they will learn to do the same for themselves. That is what self esteem is based on: the ability to recognize our attributes while admitting our faults.

That brings up one last idea: use praise—not false flattery—but appreciation. We all have unique abilities to

offer in God's service. Bad self esteem makes one think one has nothing to offer. Teenagers in the West experience a drastic plunge in feelings of self worth between the ages of 12 and 17. The media and peer groups tear down their feeling of self worth. We need to build it up. They need our help and encouragement and praise for things well done.

These are just a few of my ideas on parenting teenagers. I hope you may find them helpful.

Sakuntala Dasi (Shari Plotkin, M.Ed., LPC) is a licensed counselor whose practice involves families, individuals, couples, adolescents, and children. She has been practicing Krishna consciousness for 18 years and is an initiated disciple of Tamal Krishna Goswami. She can be contacted at 713-665-1051.

Flexibility in a Changing ISKCON **Vasu Murty** **Oakland, CA, USA**

In July, 1988, *ISKCON World Review* (now called *Hare Krishna World*) ran an editorial entitled "Flexibility in a Changing ISKCON." It read in part:

"While striving for pure states of Krishna consciousness, we face the reality that most future ISKCON members will belong to its laity rather than its clergy. Even now it appears that most ISKCON members, initiated or otherwise, live outside the temples.

"Today, few temples are large enough to accommodate even the initiated devotees—especially those with families living in the immediate vicinity. In addition, the movement will have to adjust to the increasing number of members, many of whom may not accept initiation for many years, if at all in this lifetime.

"More defined policies will be needed for congregational members, and more training needed to recruit them. Then there are devotees whose commitment to devotional service may have slack-

ened. They should be encouraged by example and friendship. We should remember that once one returns to strict observance, he is to be considered saintly, according to *Bhagavad-gita*.

"As distinctions between devotees living in ISKCON centers and those living outside them become less pronounced, and the differences in classifications of congregational members become less important, we tend to regard the 'outside' or nondevotee world from a more compassionate perspective.

"Moving toward the end of this century, we find that the house that Srila Prabhupada built is indeed greater than that of the traditional temple environs. Our capacity to adjust to this fact will help ease ISKCON through its present phase of transition."

Srila Prabhupada's Master Plan: **Varnashrama for Everyone** **Part One** **Krsna Krpa Dasi** **Alachua, Florida**

Brahmanas teach and advise society, *ksatriyas* govern and unite our variety, *vaisyas* earn wealth by agriculture and trade, and *sudras* give others aid.

Brahmacaris beg and learn, *grhasthas* give charity, manage, and earn, *vanaprasthas* leave home for austerities again, *sannyasis* renounce wealth and teach boys and men.

Father protects daughter who trains at home, husband cares for wife and never lives alone, grown son maintains old father and mother, sometimes sister is helped by brother.

These are the essential principles of *varnashrama-dharma* for devotees. Srila Prabhupada created a master plan for ISKCON education and society (for a comprehensive overview, read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, First Canto from preface to end). He explained it in all his books, as well as by direct instructions to lead-

ers on March 12-14, 1974 (*Conversations with Srila Prabhupada*, Vol. 7). In 1988 this plan was rejected by the GBC despite recommendations from a GBC committee chairman.

In March 1974, Srila Prabhupada gave some leaders an educational and organizational plan for children and adults (including nondevotees) that would solve economic problems and make everyone peaceful and attentive to hear Krishna conscious philosophy. (The principles and details are in all his books from 1961-1977.) Every ISKCON center would have a *varnashrama* college—people would learn how to act according to their *varna* (occupational duty) to earn their livelihood and would learn *ashrama* (spiritual practices). ISKCON education would have two divisions: *gurukula* for children aged 4-9, and *varnashrama* college for those age 10 and older, including adults. At the *varnashrama* college, *sannyasis* would train boys and men as *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas*, *vaisyas*, and *sudras*, according to the students' abilities and temperament (the psycho-physical nature). Detailed symptoms are listed throughout the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, especially in First, Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Cantos. A student would not be expected to learn all the activities in their *varna*, but would specialize, based on their interest and abilities. Students would also receive training in the *ashramas* appropriate for their *varna*: only *brahmanas* can enter all four *ashramas* and be *brahmacharis*, *grhasthas*, *vanaprasthas*, and *sannyasis*. *Ksatriyas* can enter three *ashramas*: *brahmacharya*, *grhastha*, and *vanaprastha*. *Vaisyas* and *sudras* can enter two *ashramas*: *brahmacharya* and *grhastha*. *Brahmacaris* are students. Only *grhasthas* can act in all four *varnas* as *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas*, *vaisyas*, and *sudras*. *Vanaprasthas* and *sannyasis* are renunciates who act as *brahmanas*. Also,

varnashrama college students would receive instruction in Krishna consciousness on how to spread Lord Caitanya's movement, as well as understand the difference between *varnashrama-dharma* in devotional service and *varnashrama-dharma* for nondevotees.

Since 1974, ISKCON devotees were supposed to be reorganized into a functioning *varnashrama* society. The *brahmanas* (*vanaprasthas* and *sannyasis* included) would teach, advise, research, worship the Deity, and provide medical services without salaries or fixed fees, but live on charity. The *brahmanas* would also teach people (nondevotees too) how to use oxen to grow food. Using the *brahmanas'* advice, the *ksatriyas* would manage ISKCON as GBCs, temple presidents, managers, etc., seeing that everyone—*brahmanas*, *sannyasis*, and *gurus*—were working according to *varnashrama-dharma* and following Srila Prabhupada's instructions. The *ksatriyas* would be responsible for the spiritual, physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of all humanity through preaching, management, justice, and land-use planning. Under the *ksatriyas'* good management, the devotees would have all necessities of life and full facility for preaching. The *vaisyas* would earn money (make profit) by producing and selling milk products and food, running vegetarian restaurants with attached reading rooms, using oxen for food production, selling useful items, and banking. The *vaisyas* would be responsible to protect the cows and to fund the activities of the other three *varnas*. The *sudras* would present the glories and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead through drama, art, and music, as well as produce goods for trade (clothing, *mrdangas*, furniture, tools, etc.), design and construct temples and buildings, and provide assistance to the other three *varnas*, in-

cluding clerical work, accounting, repairs, fieldwork, cleaning, etc.

Lord Caitanya accepts all devotional service equally; the *brahmanas*' service would not be superior to the *sudras*' service. Everyone, regardless of *varna* or *ashrama*, has an equal opportunity to serve and become a pure devotee in their service. As Srila Prabhupada explained, it is not necessary that the *sudras* take *sannyasa* to go back to Godhead (*Conversations*, Vol. 7).

Women also have *varnas* and would be trained accordingly; however, girls would be trained at home on how to follow the husband and how to assist him in his work and service according to his *varna* and the *grhastha ashrama*. Wives (initiated or not) would receive instructions from their husbands or their grown sons. And of course, women would train girls and women so that the *sannyasis* would not devise curriculum plans for them. This division of education allows the men, especially *sannyasis*, to follow their *ashrama* vows not to associate with or instruct women or girls (see *Sri Caitanya Caritamrta*, Antya-lila 2.143 - 2.144).

In summary, at the *varnashrama* college, people would learn how to become pure devotees by living at home and working according to Lord Krishna's instructions. The Mayapur ISKCON center was to be developed into a model city to demonstrate *varnashrama* society with devotees living in four different areas according to their *varna*. Functioning as a *varnashrama* society, ISKCON would provide an example for the world, creating a congenial atmosphere for unalloyed devotional service. Under Srila Prabhupada's master plan, everyone would serve Lord Krishna, and preach with the service best suited for their spiritual progress and happiness. Thus, they would go back home back to Godhead without changing their *varna* or *ashrama*.

20 Priti-laksanam

Varnashrama-dharma is extremely important. Devotees and the people in general must follow it to become pure devotees and to remain pure devotees. Even Lord Krishna, His incarnations, and His eternal associates follow the *varnashrama* regulations to set a good example for everyone. Srila Prabhupada repeated and explained the spiritual necessity of *varnashrama-dharma* thousands of times in verses, purports, lectures, letters, and conversations. From *Bhagavad-gita* to *Sri Caitanya Caritamrta*, the message is the same: spiritual advancement requires a human civilization of *varnashrama-dharma*. Srila Prabhupada built a house in which the whole world can live, a house of *daiva varnashrama-dharma*. ISKCON devotees are living at the doorstep of that house, and thus devotional service and preaching is very difficult. The *brahmanas* (teachers and *pujaris*), children, women, old men, and cows are unprotected and not engaged properly (see *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, First Canto, Chapter 9). The most intelligent devotees can't support themselves by teaching; the children lack Krishna conscious education in philosophy, job skills, and family life; the youth can't raise devotee families in decent homes; the older devotees lack facility for their impending old age; and most oxen and cows are idle so that the devotees buy nondevotee grains and milk. Few devotees have the facility to be happy and serve Lord Krishna according to their hearts' desires. The solution is to come under Srila Prabhupada's shelter and follow his instructions for *daiva varnashrama-dharma*. Any devotee can get his help and figure out their *varna* and *ashrama*; this will be explained in Part 2.

Quiet the Ritvik Rhetoric
Akhileshvara Dasa
Quebec, Canada

Who did not get involved at one point

or another with this endemic and controversial issue on the *ritvik* issue that is making its way with more vigor than ever and incites the devotees to take positions? Probably the wisest thing for most of us would be to stay neutral, requiring a great command of both the tongue and the ear.

Holding a sure opinion on the subject is equivalent to being an expert, which implies a serious study of the antagonist documents, a deep knowledge of our philosophy, a large understanding of its context in past and modern times, plus familiarity with the history, psychology, and sociology of our movement. By experience, I know that devotees in general are not so inclined to such intellectual performances. In fact, *Priti-laksanam* rings the bell in its recent edition.

Although externally everyone likes philosophizing, very few in reality make a systematic effort to penetrate and expose an idea. Adding to this, we should not neglect that devotees are also subject to human nature, particularly the tendency to cheat others, and ourselves. The facts show that this disease is as prevalent within all the levels in our society as with any other. Philosophers have come to the conclusion that logical proof to the human mind is the least of its worries when forming an opinion and acting accordingly. Descartes is given as a good example; he refused scientific evidence just because it contradicted his ideas concerning emptiness.

As devotees of Krishna, we are the first to deplore the declarations of historians who distort history in defiance of authenticity. Yet we, too, rarely analyze from a purely objective way, because we are influenced by our position, our subjective vision, our false ego. That's why a spiritual master is required, not only in transcendence, or in the mind, but manifested in a body. "Hayagriva dasa:

Recalling his early spiritual quests, Jung writes: 'In my darkness I could have wished nothing better than a real, live guru, someone possessing superior knowledge and ability, who would have disentangled from me the involuntary creations of my imagination.' Srila Prabhupada: 'Yes, according to Vedic instructions, we must have a guru in order to have perfect knowledge. The guru must factually be a representative of God. He must have seen and experienced God in fact, not simply in theory. We have to approach such a guru, and by service, surrender, and sincere inquiry, we can come to understand what is God.'" (*Dialectic Spiritualism* p. 517)

We cannot do without a spiritual master and not go astray. One is unconscious who thinks he can master, let's say, Ayurveda, without the physical presence of a guru. Don't we preach emphatically that a doctorate is required in phenomenal subject matters, what to speak of spiritual matters? A doctorate means given by a teacher who knows the matter he teaches, that is *parampara*.

We realize that exceptional cases happen from time-to-time. They are occult, or mystic, or transcendental. We can therefore infer that if professionals and scientists are refractory to the proofs and destitute of plain dealing, it goes the same, if not worse, for those whose only concern is to follow the establishment or the impulsion of the mind—the majority, in other words. Therefore, they should not get involved by *vox populi*.

We naïvely believed that devotees, by the simple fact of taking initiation or shaving their heads, or even chanting Hare Krishna, were a category apart, ideal, transcendental. Now, we are disenchanted in front of so many weaknesses that are similar to the world of non-devotees. We have to admit it. Then it will be evident that the question is not directed toward finding the truth, which

exists, but towards the strange phenomena that impels people to refuse to see it.

Therefore—one more time—that's why we have to accept the direction of a devotee more advanced, more awake, present physically, and who has developed symptoms of love of Krishna—even better, a pure devotee. And why just one? I'd be most happy to get the association of many such pure devotees. I think this is the best way to fully take advantage of Srila Prabhupada's or Krishna's association. Don't we have as a motto: *gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasa*, the servant of the servant of the servant? Let's not disregard the strength of desire.

To play the devil's advocate, one may retort: what if there aren't any around? In such conjecture, the elaboration of a doctrine or a system of compensation will not be regarded as a final solution, but temporary, a kind of moratorium. The presence of a pure devotee is the only remedy for the ailments of humanity, the only key for the doors to the spiritual world. A person who goes to a place of pilgrimage and does not seek a realized soul is compared to a cow, *sa eva gocara*. We should therefore strongly cultivate, individually and collectively, such aspiration.

I am aware that Srila Prabhupada gives more importance to the spiritual sound than the physical presence, there is no difficulty in understanding that. It puts my back up when we use this to minimize the prime importance of association with advanced devotees for making progress in spiritual life. Srila Prabhupada: "The father becomes more enlivened when he sees his son advance beyond himself. Similarly, the spiritual master takes more pleasure in seeing his disciple advance than in advancing himself." (TLC p.208) Only exceptional personalities can realize the profound teachings of Srila Prabhupada, then

distribute it. His sentence "If only I could make one pure devotee, my mission will be a success" is a revelation. Therefore, let's pray for such devotees who will be able to realize the teachings of his transcendental books and share it with us.

I would also like to point out to *Priti's* editor, Sarva-satya dasa, whom I congratulate for "keeping up the good work," that it is sad to hear that, after all these years, Bhakti-Tirtha Swami financed a charitable subscription to other GBCs. As responsible representatives of our movement, if they are showing signs of indifference towards *Priti-laksanam*, it foresees no good result for its promulgation. That a subscription was given to them does not prove they read it, what to speak of participate by writing in. We have in *Priti* an indication for judging the existing interactions between the members of our society and its leaders. In his editorial, Sarva-satya wrote: "I hope you will want it (*Priti-laksanam*) enough to fill out the enclosed renewal form and return it with a check. What matters to me is that you actually want it." I understand also that only a minority of devotees show interest in this important journal. They are following, I guess, in the footsteps of the top leaders who haven't had much concern for social affairs, as indirectly reported by Braja Bihari Prabhu in the same issue about an article on *varnashrama*: "I requested the editors of *Priti-laksanam* to reprint it here because I feel it is important for all the devotees to know that the GBC is beginning to recognize the need to address devotees' social issues." At last!

Accomplished Women in ISKCON Nandini dasi Mesa, AZ, USA

On the America Online Hindu Forum bulletin boards we had a discussion in April about women in Krishna consciousness. Devotees commented that

Srila Prabhupada said women in ISKCON are just as capable as their godbrothers. To support the point, I posted a list of accomplished women I have known, as follows. Feel free to add more names because it's only a partial list.

Govinda—Grew magnificent tulasi trees in Hawaii. This pleased Srila Prabhupada. She also published her children's books and these are available at ISKCON centers. She has been a devotee for three decades and an excellent example for other women throughout the movement.

Jamuna—One of the first devotees; one of those chosen to go to England when they met the Beatles and launched Krishna consciousness in Europe. She is the female voice from the *Radha Krishna Temple* album produced by George Harrison. She sings in *Hare Krishna Mantra*, which became number one in seven European countries. It is her voice we hear in the temple every morning singing, "Govindam adi purusham tam aham bhajami." This pleased Srila Prabhupada very much. She also traveled in India as Srila Prabhupada's cook and wrote her cookbook on Indian cuisine that became a bestseller.

Koumadaki—A leader at the BBT, publishing Srila Prabhupada's books. Later, she worked on the appeal for the Robin George case, earned her paralegal degree, and went to work in Beverly Hills. She now lives in Seattle and does Deity service there.

Monmohini—managed the *Back to Godhead* subscriptions for many years.

Bhadra—One of the best cooks in New Dvaraka. She was called upon to cook for celebrities ranging from George Harrison to Annie Lennox. She also wrote the recipes that were used in *The Higher Taste*. She worked in the ISKCON Legal Affairs office, and later for ISKCON's attorneys in Century City.

She still occasionally cooks for festivals in New Dvaraka.

Satarupa—Danish model pictured on the cover of *Who Are They?* magazine. She was a successful model from the age of 18, when she became Miss Denmark and appeared on magazine covers throughout Europe. She donated all her income to support the French *gurukula* (which I hear was one of the best in ISKCON). After becoming a devotee she turned down modeling jobs that broke the four regs, such as promotions for cigarettes, etc. She is still a great devotee, now living in Paris.

Nitya-tripta—BBT photographer. She took many of the Deity photos that appeared in *Back to Godhead* and the BBT books. She is an enthusiastic and daring photographer who would go to any length to get a picture. After moving to Italy she began working on multimedia presentations and has traveled around the world presenting her work and assisting her husband, Krsna Prema, a well-loved musician.

Jadurani—One of the first women to join ISKCON. She was an artist, so Srila Prabhupada told her to paint for Krishna. Her paintings are pictured in the BBT books, and under her guidance many more women joined the BBT art department, including Dhriti, Dirga, Dharmada, Jagat-karana, and many others (I'm probably leaving someone out). Jadurani was also an enthusiastic book distributor and loved to go on marathons. She was giving classes from the beginning of her devotional service, as well as managing projects.

Gouri—A *sankirtana* woman in Los Angeles who was pictured in *Back to Godhead* selling books. In 1988 she was blessed with a passing almost like that of Haridas Thakur. She was a pleasure to be with, despite the terminal cancer that caused her much discomfort. She was an inspiration to us all for her purity, her love for Krishna and Srila

Prabhupada, her *kirtanas*, her classes, and her healing into death.

Bhavatarini—One of the early devotees. She traveled in India with Srila Prabhupada and became a favorite of Srila Prabhupada's sister. She also learned to cook there. She writes and sings children's songs about Krishna and her tapes are available at ISKCON centers.

Pranada—Another woman from the BTG staff who later founded *Priti-laksanam*, which is one of the best publications in ISKCON. She headed up the Krishna Community Fund during the building of the Alachua, Florida temple, and now runs her own successful printing service, employing several devotees. Pranada still contributes to BTG by supporting its managing editor, her husband, Nagaraja.

Sita—typesetter for the Spanish BBT. Without her, the Spanish BBT would have taken at least 10 more years to publish its first Spanish translations.

Balai—typesetter for the American BBT. She and Sita worked side-by-side at their old-time typesetting machines for many years. It was a lot more difficult back then, but due to their efforts, the BBT was able to produce the hardcover books we now have.

Labangalati—The most powerful book distributor in the history of ISKCON. She also traveled to the Soviet Union to preach in the 1980s.

Ritasya—A former model from England who produced the outstanding documentary, *Persuaders*, which exposed guru arrogance in Western Europe (i.e., the former guru Bhagavan). After her movie showed on BBC TV, she moved to Bangladesh and began traveling there to distribute *prasadam* and chant.

Karta—One of the most loving and thoughtful *pujaris* in the movement.

Vrindavana—An outstanding book distributor, who always made people

love Krishna when they took a book. She later became the women's *sankirtana* leader in New Dvaraka for many years.

Nidra—an outstanding book distributor from Denver. She and Vrindavana started together and both could deliver a taste of pure love of Krishna along with the books they sold. Nidra still corresponds with dozens of people who bought books from her over the years.

Urmila—A *gurukula* teacher and leader of reform in ISKCON education. She is an outspoken proponent for a better role for women and children in devotional service.

Visaka—A filmmaker and photographer for the BBT. Her career documenting the life of Srila Prabhupada with her filmmaker husband, Yadubara, is already well-known. She continues her photography and art career in California.

Mammata—BBT staff person. She transcribed as many Srila Prabhupada tapes as anyone, and served the BBT in that role for many, many years.

Vaibhavi—Artist and preacher from Australia. She and her husband, Caru, designed the ornate interiors of temples in the South Seas, the Berkeley temple, and took part in designing others. She and her husband started KHQN radio station in Utah in the 1980s and now have a thriving temple community with good relations with their Mormon neighbors. They are about to build a big Vedic temple Vaibhavi designed.

I encourage the GBC to revise its policy on women to allow female gurus, GBC, BBT trustees, *kirtana* leaders, *Bhagavatam* reciters, and so on. Their new policy should encourage women to take on these roles as their rightful place as preachers in the movement. That will help a lot.



Personal Ads Too Personal Jagadvasu Dasa Accra-North, Ghana

I see *Priti-laksanam* as the real forum for *istagosthis* for the members of Srila Prabhupada's family—ISKCON. The journal is a landmark in the annals of our society, notwithstanding some distasteful remarks by some of our leaders, who view it as a trash of complaints and attacks by some disgruntled devotees.

I totally agree with Sarva-satya Dasa's comment (Vol. 18 Sept. 1996, page 2) that: "These loving exchanges, revealing our minds in confidence to one another, will make us all stronger in our Krishna consciousness and make our movement healthy and dynamic. Even if some of these exchanges have the appearance of criticism, they can still by loving, if given and received in constructive spirit. It is by this process of communication that we can honestly address ISKCON's problems and work together to solve them."

Yes. That says it all. This is the spirit—the spirit of brotherhood. We are members of the same family, Srila Prabhupada's family. Therefore, we must unite and work in that spirit of unity. Srila Prabhupada requests we work in this spirit of unity, of course with diversity. And unity in diversity does not mean that we become isolated to ourselves and become selfish and inimical to each other.

We are a society—a spiritual community. As a society or spiritual community, the spirit should be to support and compliment each other's efforts, where we can or where there is a lack in our bid in becoming Krishna conscious—not that we are islands. Or if we shy away from the so-called complaints or criticisms, how do we resolve them or at least put the record straight? We must face the obvious and approach reality. Let the criticisms come. Let the complaints come. Let us hear the appeals. And let us con-

structively view them. There may be some useful suggestions and ideas that may be healthy for the growth and strengthening of our society.

On this premise therefore, I felt elated on reading that Bhakti-Tirtha Swami, a GBC, has subscribed for all the GBC to get *Priti*. The leaders of our society should be more concerned with the welfare—spiritually and materially—nay, the plights and even grievances of the members of the society, and on the basis of this they can chart an ideal community where all members feel secure and the spirit of brotherhood flourishes like anything!

Nevertheless, I would not also fail to point out some noted criticisms of your journal. Reading the rather mundane Personal ads in such an important spiritual journal can be nauseating. What is the benefit in reading about a 49-year-old man (who's supposed to be entering the *vanaprastha ashrama*) looking for a "sweet girl" for a wife?

Honestly, I feel very embarrassed and too cautious not to carelessly drop my *Priti* to land in the hands of a non-devotee, who may read this kind of thing and begin thinking that we are another hippie organization. No. Srila Prabhupada did not start a hippie movement, but a spiritual movement that transformed the hippies into saintly happyes.

I feel that these ads are mundane or material "loving exchanges," not the kind of loving exchanges Rupa Goswami Prabhupada has enjoined us to share. Srila Rupa Goswami says "revealing one's mind in confidence" and "inquiring confidentially." In fact, man/woman relationships and the desire to enjoy each other should be the most confidential issues that should not involve a third party.

I am simply expressing the candid opinion of most devotees, some even *sannyasis* and GBCs, who have even

stopped reading *Priti* because of this kind of mockery. And as you can see, it pays us no good discouraging devotees from benefiting from the on-going *istagosthis* in the *Priti-laksanam*; simply because we want to compromise with the sense gratification of some few. Do they really need to advertise themselves to get married? Such marriage is simply based on sex attraction and does not endure for long.

**Disposable Devotees Hanker
for Krishna Society
Nanda-gopa Dasa
Alicante, Spain**

Srila Prabhupada accepted me as his disciple in 1975 in Los Angeles, and from that point on my life's work was dedicated to Srila Prabhupada's movement, until 1993.

After I joined a few months later, I joined the *sankirtana* party, going out and distributing *Back to Godhead*. A little later some of the "big guns" of *sankirtana*, Tripurari and Pragosh, came to Los Angeles and trained us how to distribute big books and change-up people in the LA airport. Christmas time we dressed up as Santa Claus and fought with the Christian Santa Clauses in the downtown LA streets.

In 1978 I went to my native country, Greece. There I joined with other devotees and opened a center in Athens. I served there for many years, doing book distribution, cooking, *pujari* service, cleaning, and was temple president. There was tremendous pressure serving here due to outside influences and lack of communication and relationships between the devotees.

I am now living in Spain with my wife and our eight-year-old daughter. We try to keep our family and our heads together and raise our daughter with love and without fanaticism. I say this because my wife and I have been through a lot of mistreatment and suffering due to

fanaticism and lack of love and trust.

Now after 20 years since the departure of Srila Prabhupada, and with all his instructions he gave us on how to organize a happy society, still there is hardly even one community of happy devotees. Years go by and we do not see any tangible and realistic changes and developments in ISKCON. Grihastha communities are completely neglected. Hundreds and thousands of sons and daughters of Srila Prabhupada and their children now are living and depending on this materialistic society. Previously, we were taught by our leaders that we should reject and abandon this sinful society. Now the "big" *brahmanas* of ISKCON have to go around begging people to buy a baseball hat, Indian painting, clean hotel rooms, or any other miserable, stinky work in order to maintain our families. After so many years of serving in devotional life and approaching our 50s, we do not have skills that are necessary to obtain a livelihood in the material society.

Well, dear friends, I really think that in the name of big, big preaching we have done a lot of neglect and mistreatment to many sincere members, who sacrificed our lives dreaming that one day there will be a happy spiritual society in which we and our children can live and build our futures.

It is obvious to everyone that Srila Prabhupada wanted a social structure, work, self-sufficiency, and opportunities for the members of ISKCON, while at the same time helping us to chant and be happy. In contrast to that, most of us are living disconnected from ISKCON, frustrated, and losing hope. An abundance of families are divorced, their children are dispersed and frustrated. Don't we see that a society cannot be complete only with *brahmanas* and book distributors? Why are our dear leaders waiting to start to form a social structure? Perhaps if they cannot organize a complete soci-

ety, then maybe the people in the renounced order could go and live in temples and monasteries, like it was in the Vedic culture. In this way the *grhastas* can unite, work together, and organize their communities and societies.

My intentions are not at all to offend anyone, but at the same time I want to make some things clear, which are in the hearts of many *grhastas*. Please contact my wife and I for any exchange of ideas concerning these topics. Our address is:

Nanda-gopa and Priya Sakhi
Apartado de Correos 152
Monovar, Alicante, Spain
Ph: 96-696-0312

**Prabhupada Meditation
Thakor Topiwala
Pineville, NC, USA**

His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada is the greatest sage of this age. As *Bhagavad-gita* describes: "ye yathā mam prapadayante tams tathāiva bhajamy aham. As all surrender unto me. I reward them accordingly." (Bg. 4.11)

The same truth is applicable to Srila Prabhupada's mission in service of our supreme father, Lord Sri Krishna. The way he organized the whole Krishna consciousness movement includes everyone, whether he is a devotee or non-devotee, initiated or not, black or brown or white, egoistic or non-egoistic, personalist or impersonalist. If he or she renders any service to any part of his mission, that person is certainly bound to get some spiritual benefit as is mentioned above.

I was born and raised in India. I always had some sentimental attachment to religious practices and studied philosophies which hardly offer any concrete explanation of who we are; who is God; where does He live; what is our relationship to Him; why do we have to suffer in the cycle of birth, death, old age and disease; how can one approach Him?

and so on... By the grace of God my good fortune in having the association of many good devotees and rendering a little service here and there has made me aware of my constitutional position on this planet. Now, how far I want to surrender and progress, that is left up to my own ability.

Most of my life I have affiliated with Hindu community activities, like the Hindu community of Charlotte which has established a temple and cultural center. I conduct Sunday classes for children ages 5-13 years, mainly concentrating on the message of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. I have spoken about Hinduism at churches, schools, interfaith congregations, hospitals, and private meetings. Only on the strength of Bhaktivedanta Swami's purports have I been able to explain Hindu religion as the branch of *sanatana-dharma*, and ultimately Krishna consciousness. As my duty and service to the pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada, I have been able to distribute varieties of his books to professors, doctors, politicians, and even some saintly people who are preaching and practicing Hinduism. Although I do not have any qualification of a devotee, still it is my pleasure to share my personal experience with some devotees who are affiliated with Krishna consciousness philosophy.

All glories to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and all glories to all devotees who serve him whole-heartedly. Haribol!

**Hide No More, Mending Heart
Dhanistha Dasi
Stonefort, IL, USA**

I joined Srila Prabhupada's movement in 1973, and from the beginning, distributed his books as best I could (a flea among elephants), encouraged by such great souls as my Godbrother Jayananda Prabhu who would round up us young, wide-eyed children and take

us for hours and days on Harinama *sankirtana*, up and down the streets of the San Francisco Bay Area, serving us *prasadam* with his own kind hands.

Then there were those bleak years. They began for me in 1977, a long dark winter of discontent. I thought I was wandering aimlessly alone. It was so dark, the storm so turbulent, I could not hear my heart's guide or the calls for help from those other castaways in the dark.

But I did two things that saved me. I hid, and I prayed to Srila Prabhupada. I hid from the covered *jivas* that disrobed our dignity and from the leaders who gave their powerful consent. I threw up my hands, and the Lord has supplied my cloth and shot down my illusion of an enemy.

Today I continue distributing books as Srila Prabhupada instructed me, to please him, to give his mercy to others in the form of his *vani*, and to lift an insurmountable burden of dust accumulated in this coal heart of mine. Book distribution does all this for me—it is mostly a selfish motive, my heart is dark and I pray by doing this service (insignificant though my contributions are) by Srila Prabhupada's grace, the rising sun of the Holy Name and realized knowledge of its sweet taste will enlighten my heart and lighten my burden of suffering due to the excess baggage, both gross and subtle, that I insist on dragging around with me life after life.

You won't see my name in the score sheets, but I receive by the magnanimous *Sankirtana Newsletter* coordinators, the newsletter monthly. Thanks. I read them cover-to-cover and am enlivened to see young and old devotees fully participating in Lord Caitanya's mission by distribution of recorded *kirtana*. Bless you all in your sincere and selfless efforts.

I reside at present on a newly purchased parcel of land in the heartland

(midwest USA) with gardens, forests, shade trees, and a humble cottage for our small temple we call Brhat Mrdanga Mandir. Though coming here with approximately \$38 cash, my clothes, and personal books in late 1993, I somehow met the bills, purchased a better vehicle, and purchased this new temple location on the tiny income from a school bus driving job (which averages no more than \$300 per month) and by straight forward book distribution.

It can be done, if I can maintain, preach, grow, and contribute a little to the *sankirtana* effort, almost solely by book distribution. Believe me, anyone, anywhere can do it!

I have no enemies, no intelligence, no institutional backing, no husband, no GBC, no expertise, and no politics. Hand-in-hand I have only two things—faith and prayer. By these, all things are possible with the grace of Srila Prabhupada. This letter is meant to give hope.

I give humble thanks at the lotus feet of all the BBT Archives staff for their consistent assistance, encouragement, and support to my service. All I can offer is a return of the same. I am eternally indebted to them (as my outstanding bill proves).

I mean no harm. Call me rebellious, an independent woman, a "thirty-six ounce container," call me what you will—I don't care. I'm an unimportant, insignificant soul, one of the fortunate riders on the saving grace of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON ship. I'm not at the helm, I'm not in 1st class, 2nd class, or 3rd class. I'm down swabbing the deck, as he told me to do.

There's no material glory for the insignificant members of this family, but take heart dear kindred souls, there is much happy solace in simple service—that's the real glory. Who wants profit, adoration, and distinction? The track record isn't very good for us contaminated souls that get it—we puff up till we

burst.

I'm not discrediting enthusiasm, transcendental competition, and all that. Things don't have to be either/or in spiritual life. But all glories to all the devotees in the back of the temple down on their knees praying their hearts clean, wiping their children's tears, fighting for a righteous cause, serving *prasadam*, cooking *prasadam*, honoring *prasadam*. All glories to Srila Prabhupada's mission far and wide! All glories to Sri Krishna *sankirtana*!

On this ship's deck sometimes, more often than not, there's some argument going on, some philosophical jostling, some political upheaval, some decadent gossiping. Could those who are in the midst of this unclean spillage just move a little to the right or left? We need to wash down the deck of false egos so we can have *kirtana*. There are some old ladies and children that just want to dance. We don't want dancing devotees to slip and fall because the floor was littered with trash instead of soft flower petals and sprinkles of rose water for their lotus feet.

I truly feel if we could all get down on our knees and clean the floor together we would do a lot better job, and while we're down there, let's pray. Let's just pray.

This letter is not an ad canvassing for a GBC, a husband, an enemy, or a fight. Please, I'm nobody. But if you want to attack, shoot the arrows. My heart is full of Srila Prabhupada's protection. I've got nothing to lose and I'm not in need. Thanks to those devotees who, from this rambling, can see my heart. My attempt is honest encouragement to the small and insignificant ones. I am a humble fool at your lotus feet.

Please pray for me. I mean no harm. Please forgive my offenses. Still there may be those who find fault here, go ahead, take aim and fire on this soft heart. God knows I can use the bold reminders of my glaring impudence to

make me humble, bring me to my knees, force me to pray, to chant incessantly. But I have no fear, it's no longer the time to be hiding.

In the first garden I constructed here, "Prabhupada's Shade Garden," I placed huge lime and sandstones. In constructing the pathway with flat stones, I noticed that two in particular side-by-side looked like a heart broken in two. So I used that as a theme in my meditation to express the mood I feel present here at Brhat Mrdanga Mandir. "A broken heart can be mended by God if He has all the pieces." (I saw these words on a church billboard.) Beside the heart stone, I placed on either side two stones almost identical in shape to wings. In the crevice of the core of the broken heart, I planted mint to heal, soothe, mend, and join the pieces. Cinnamon and basil are there to lend fragrance and spice, and the entire scene is surrounded by bright red flowering impatiens edged in herbal thyme and sage.

Our service can be manifest externally and internally like this heart path in Prabhupada's Garden. We don't have to hide it for fear of it breaking . . . just take to your wings. The devotional creeper can bring all the pieces together for Krishna to do His work.

If you wish to walk on this path of the winged heart, please write me. I just want to share what's been given us here—and to hear, chant, and dance in good association on a clean deck and a mended devotional path.

I pray this message be considered for the content of its character and not for the unfortunate, insignificant container from which it flowed.

I am interested in hearing from any women devotees who would like to come here for a visit or just call (or write) to share some Vaishnava realizations and Krishna *katha*. Contact me at Route 1 Box 267, Stonefort, Illinois 62987, USA; 618-672-4334.

I want to reiterate that I am not looking for anything but Krishna conscious association, and still there's much to heal within myself. So if devotees can relate to this letter, then please give me a call. Particularly, I'm looking for women devotees who want to come here and not "retreat," but humbly march forward. It's no longer the time to be hiding.

Dealing with Depression Svayamjata Dasa San Lorenzo, CA, USA

I want to talk about the awful, deadly, painful, terrifying disease called depression. No, I don't suffer from depression, but I do know of several devotees that do. Depression can overcome an individual as quickly as a Florida thunderstorm.

I can see and empathize with the intense pain, agony, fear, horror, sorrow, and terror of an uncertain future and outcome.

Devotees can experience thoughts of suicide, loss of memory, loneliness, terror, instability, madness, rage, and health problems. I'm hoping to paint a visual bleak and terrible picture here. Thank you to devotees who are "kind to all living entities" and who find compassion and empathy for all these souls.

Unfortunately, there are a few devotees who ridicule these individuals. Obviously they know nothing of this dreaded disease, nor experienced first-hand what it can do to a devotee.

Another unfortunate circumstance of this disease is that the solution (or temporary solution) is drugs of all different kinds. Many of these drugs have side effects which are just as bad as the disease. A devotee has to keep trying them until they can find one that helps relieve the depression with minimal side effects. In the meantime, the devotee is suffering like hell. These drugs have to be taken a long duration of time, possibly for life.

There seems to be a breakthrough for

treating depression. I have witnessed and heard that Reiki can help certain individuals to gradually stop taking drugs for depression.

I'm not a doctor (nor do I play one on television) nor am I an expert in the field of depression. I'm speaking only as an observer who has heard from depressed devotees, one of whom said it did cure them from the disease. I feel that this information needs to be passed on to our Godbrothers and God sisters who are suffering from this deadly disease. The wonderful news for all these souls is that drugs may not be the answer for them for life. Reiki is so easy to perform, it only requires finding the time to perform it.

Am I promoting Reiki? Yes! I'm also a Reiki II practitioner and I have personally felt and seen the remarkable effects of its healing qualities. Srila Prabhupada said "utility is the principle." We need to seek out and utilizing those things that can help us heal so we can continue to strive for our supreme goal of Krishna consciousness.

If you think you have depression, please check it out. If you know someone who has it, please help them get information. And if you want to know more about Reiki, seek out a practitioner. You maybe be saving a life. Please spread the understanding and compassion around.

Svayamjata has an ad for his book on page 41. — Editor

Protecting Srila Prabhupada's House Excerpts from a Speech to the GBC Mayapur Meetings, 1997 Bhakti Tirtha Swami

We should challenge the cynicism that is contaminating the atmosphere, one environment after another, in our Krishna conscious projects, and see where and how we can make a tangible difference. After all, Srila Prabhupada has given us this house and the furnish-

ings. His house is being attacked externally by court cases; his house is being attacked by *raksasas* and power demons. His house is being attacked internally; doors and windows are being broken. His house is being put on fire by *ritvik* philosophy. Elements of his house are being taken out by so many other types of teachers.

It is our duty to make a difference. Here we have so many beautiful renunciates, and they are holding the *danda*, the staff of protection for society. They have the weapons for controlling the mind, the body, and the senses. We should remind ourselves as we hold our *dandas* that this is our staff of protection to see that Srila Prabhupada's house is kept properly fit. We are here to magnify, beautify, and refurbish what is there—and we stand guard to protect.

We have created the *ritviks* by not preserving the proper atmosphere. Would there be *ritviks* if people were properly cared for? Would there be *ritviks* if people felt proper security? Would there be *ritviks* if people were properly engaged? Would there be people who would accept the *ritvik* philosophy if there were no fall downs?

No, *ritvik* philosophy is like a monster coming out of ourselves. We have to protect each other by reminding each other about what Srila Prabhupada has given. We protect each other by living as an example. We must radiate and amplify *bhakti*. We have situations where people are confused about their connection with the guru. Some people have no guru, some people's gurus have left them in an inauspicious way and they are confused, they don't know what to do. They are wounded, they are afraid, they are skeptical, and in some cases extremely cynical.

So many of our children are now gone, so many of our senior women are now gone, so many of our senior leaders are now gone.

As we protect Srila Prabhupada's house, we have to be ready, for Srila Prabhupada will come once again to see what shape his house is in. When Srila Prabhupada wants to know, "Where are those beautiful *gurukula* kids who used to sing those *bhajans* when I was here in Mayapur?" We will have to say, "Srila Prabhupada, most of them have gone into *maya*." "Where are the *gurukulas*?" And we say, "Srila Prabhupada, we had to close them." "Where is Dvarkadisha, who I took by my own hand and showed him how to write?" And we will have to tell him, "Srila Prabhupada, he is in the material energy, and he has no desire, if he has children, to send them to *gurukula*. He is so depressed from not being protected." "And where is Sarasvati who I used to call into my room?" And we will have to say, "She is somewhere in the material energy rushing after material shelter because we have not provided sufficient spiritual shelter."

And then he asks, "Where are the Deities that I have installed? Where is that leader who built my Spiritual Sky? Where is the devotee who started my project in Germany? Where is the devotee who started my project in Latin America? Where is the devotee who was pushing on my books, and in charge of BBT? Where are those devotees?" And we will have to say, "Srila Prabhupada, we don't know. Some are Realtors, some are rushing after gold. Some have left their body due to murder."

We have to let him know what has happened. And he will say, "What did you do? Did you remind them about my mission? When did you go and try to bring them back? Did you go and beg them to please give up this foolishness and come back to your family? What are you doing now, to see that we don't have more personalities leaving?"

Srila Prabhupada will want to know from us, and we will all be responsible individually to answer, and we will be in

shame as we look at what is happening to what Srila Prabhupada left. He will say, "What is this *ritvik* philosophy? And why have people in my house been unchaste and going to other places? Why do people have to go somewhere else for a proper residence?"

Sometimes we think, "Oh, Srila Prabhupada has left." But that is nonsense. Prabhupada has not left. Srila Prabhupada is still with us. But more important than thinking Prabhupada is with us, we should be thinking, "Prabhupada is coming!" because when Prabhupada was here, we were lying, we were fornicating, we were falling down, sometimes even behind the altar. Srila Prabhupada was writing so many letters dealing with leaders who were engaged in deviation. Sometimes we had the conception that everything was good, but it was full of problems, and Srila Prabhupada wasn't able to write because of the problems. But when we would think that Srila Prabhupada was coming, we would change, we would look to do our best. We would take out the nonsense things, we would fix the shingles. We would clean the house. We would be on our best alert.

We should think that Srila Prabhupada is coming and he is going to look and see what we have done, and what we have not completed. He is going to want to know, "What has happened with my city? Why has it taken so long to fix my *samadhi*? What has happened to my cows and farm projects?" Where is that *varnashrama-dharma* that I gave you, that I said will change society?" And we will have to tell him that we are not quite ready for that yet. And he will want to know, "Why haven't you changed your consciousness after so many years of chanting Hare Krishna?"

But there are also so many wonderful things, like the Delhi Project, the Bangalore Project, and other unusual, exceptional projects. There is so much discus-

sion about social welfare. We are discussing a hospice program, a home for the elderly. There is a need to be properly holistic. We can not save people just on philosophy. There must be a culture that helps to maintain that philosophy and show its application. Where do you know a drug addict or an alcoholic becoming free just by philosophy? There has to be an environment to support them. If we replace the lower things with the higher things, then it becomes possible, as we protect each other by the culture of love and devotion.

Love is not a sentimental thing, *tesam satatam yuktanam* . . . "Those who worship me with devotion and love constantly, I give them the knowledge how to come unto me." Krishna said Himself, proper love means that you will give proper organization so that the devotion comes through. Proper love means that we create an environment that makes people become devotees, and encourages them and makes them feel secure about being devotees, and makes them eager and enthused to go out and make others devotees. We have devotees all over the world who are becoming timid about preaching, because they themselves are not fully satisfied. We have leaders who are feeling so depressed they are wondering what to do.

I don't know about you, but I am fried with my nonsense, I am fried with my insufficiencies. I am fried that we have so many people leaving and people about to leave when we have the highest philosophy on the planet. I am fried that we are here in Mayapur *dhama* and there are so many of us who are just waiting to leave because we are in so much anxiety. I am in anxiety that here on the altar are Visaka, Lalita, Sutra, someone chanting, someone dancing, someone fanning Krishna, and Madhava is playing His beautiful flute. Oh! I can't hear it, and you can't hear it.

And Srila Prabhupada is sitting there

on the *Vyasasana* and he is shouting out: "PLEASE SAVE MY PROPERTY, PROTECT MY PROPERTY, PROTECT MY CHILDREN, PROTECT MY GRAND-CHILDREN, SAVE THIS WORLD!" He is crying out and I can't hear him. I am fanning him and I am simply fanning the mosquitoes. You may want to take note of your own level of compassion, you may want to take note of how much you are protecting what Srila Prabhupada has given. Because as we properly protect, then there will be more and more unfoldments. As we properly protect, we will see more and more people come into the devotional environment, and they will bring others because of their enthusiasm.

The other day I was giving a workshop in England, and I was explaining how devotees are going to other sources. I am not a fundamentalist, I'm an eclectic. But even our own writings are secondary, what to speak of other people's writings, next to Srila Prabhupada's books and teachings. If we study something else, it should be only to see how we can understand the lingo—how to form bridges—to get Srila Prabhupada's message across. People are taking religiously these seven habits by Stephen Kobey. Why is he affecting so many peoples lives? Because he is Mormon. If you know Mormonism, when you see Kobey's books, you see Mormon teachings that have been pushed behind material knowledge and have effected so many peoples minds. Scott Peck is writing so many books on communities, affecting so many peoples lives. Why? because he has knowledge of Quakerism. We are reading so many things on relationships. Why is Deepak Chopra making millions of dollars affecting millions of people? Because he's using material knowledge of the Vedas, and it is that Vedic knowledge that is coming through. Why are we going to people who are using some of their spirituality with their material

knowledge, and we have a greater amount of spiritual knowledge?

We should be the ones heading the ecology movement, letting people know what the real sense of taking care of Bhumi is. We should be leading the nutrition movement, getting people to understand what is real vegetarianism, how to offer their food.

Let us pray that one day we will come to these GBC meetings and we will be talking about how the Avatar has purchased an island, how the government of Bengal has given Jayapataka Maharaja the whole district of Bengal. We want to hear that Jaya Dosha has been offered the editorship of *Times* and he wants to know from the assembly of devotees, "What should I do, should I take this or should I take *Newsweek*? We want people to come to us, "You Krishna conscious devotees have such strong, principled family life. What is your secret, please let us know?"

Srila Prabhupada warned us about the dangers of sense gratification and the dangers of *moksha* (liberation). He warned us about *smarta brahmanas* and *sahajyas*. We must take advantage of the time that we have left and do our parts to protect this house and its residents. Some of us may not be here much longer.

Our Unfinished Business Lokanath Swami Delhi, India

Many of the things that Srila Prabhupada instructed us to do were left unfinished, hardly achieved, never started, or done in a distorted way. Many aspects of his mission remain undeveloped or neglected, such as *varnashrama*, which is now being called "social development." Sometime before Srila Prabhupada's departure, he spoke with Abhirama Prabhu about his one lamentation, that he wanted *varnashrama* development within ISKCON and this

we haven't done yet. Srila Prabhupada's children's, and his children's children's education, relationships, and economy are in shambles. *Varnashrama* development is essential.

I was listening to Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu just a few days ago, and he thinks that initially, Srila Prabhupada said that social development wasn't necessary for us, because we are Vaishnavas. But as years passed, Srila Prabhupada had a second thought and he started talking more and more of this *varnashrama* development. But then devotees were saying: "Prabhupada, we are Vaishnavas, we don't need this." And Prabhupada said: "Really, are we?"

Srila Prabhupada realized that this social system was not for one who has transcended the modes, who is *paramahansa*, or in the advanced stage. It is for beginners or *neophytes*, and then they gradually evolve out of or beyond this *varnashrama*.

Also unfinished is the Mayapur Project, which Srila Prabhupada founded in 76. This is Lord Nityananda's desire and Srila Prabhupada's desire. He wanted not only the temple and planetarium, but a city that would be like a display of *varnashrama* in practice.

In the early 90's, we were trying to bring attention to the GBC on different issues. At that time they weren't fully convinced that these were issues that leaders' attention needed to focus upon. They said that there could be a survey and they would see the result. We conducted the survey (by Dr. Burke Rochford), and now, even before looking at the finished product, the GBC are realizing that these issues are important. Like in Alachua, the youth had a program and met with the GBC, and many of the GBC were in tears to hear the things that these children went through. Some of them pledged funds to the youth. Since then, everyone is supportive of the youth, who were otherwise

neglected. The women's ministry and youth ministry have been formed by the GBC after realizing what the mothers in ISKCON have gone through. They wanted to make a ministry to look after such issues. Sudharma Dasi has been attending GBC meetings for the past two years, speaking on behalf of the women in ISKCON. She showed us a video and talked about spousal abuse. There was a great deal of discussion and concern about it.

The last Mayapur meeting, the GBC decided to organize a social-economic development committee, which will be meeting in Kartika in Vrindavana to review the performance of each one of us on the committee. We are doing research on different issues of social and economic community development. We will make a presentation to the GBC body at Mayapur, and there should be good outcome and recommendations.

Sarva-satya Dasa has called for "The Era of the Vaishnavas" to begin. The members of the Centennial team and other senior Vaishnavas also think like that. We are seriously considering renaming *Prabhupada Toshani* magazine to *Vaishnava Toshani*. *Toshani* means something that gives satisfaction. We will have a full report on development of activities which will be pleasing to the Vaishnavas. When Vaishnavas are pleased—I mean Srila Prabhupada's children and grand-children—Srila Prabhupada will be pleased.

Mistakes have been made by our leadership, and I think it is a matter of admitting. And I think that we are seriously thinking about rectifying mistakes. Only fools don't learn from their mistakes, and learning from mistakes is becoming wise. Wisdom is prevailing. There is realization, and they are making changes, so in the years to come there should be some visible improvements that everyone should be able to notice.

They (GBC) should be given another

chance. Yes, they should be given three chances, so they have one more chance left. Srila Prabhupada put them in leadership positions, but some of them had only a few years in the movement, and then in 10 years they were made gurus. I think we were sincerely trying, but with the departure of Srila Prabhupada there were all sorts of managerial responsibilities of a worldwide organization. Something like this has not happened before—inexperienced devotees spreading Krishna consciousness around the world—at least not in recorded history.

I ask all the devotees to have patience, and to also prove by that quality that you are Vaishnavas. Not that you expect only Vaishnava qualities from the leaders. And I ask that you get involved and have more direct dialogue with our leaders. The GBC should hear from our Godbrothers and our Godsisters. Let them address the leaders, not just hear from rumors or second and third hand information. Communication is important, from that there will be cooperation. Whatever happened at the time of some devotees' exit from the movement, now may be different. Five or 10 years have passed. Please see if things have changed. Come to Mayapur or Vrindavana. Come to the GBC meetings. We will appreciate a senior devotee from the good old days on the scene. You could see how now it is different and update your information. In the meetings there used to be so much arguing, but now they (the GBC) are minimizing and subduing this. Come and see.

Chant Together, Don't Argue Rupacandra Dasi Bonners Ferry, ID, USA

Milestones were made at Seattle's Ratha-yatra festival when devotees from both sides of the *ritvik* issue carried the Deities to the site. The Chanting For Unity Project perspective of cooperatively

helping advance movement in America by devotees from all sectors, and both sides of the *ritvik* issue, increasing *harinama sankirtana* activity and joining together whenever possible and at Ratha-yatras, overall has met with a willingness to tolerate the differing beliefs on guru issues. However, the glitch is that fault-finding is still taking place and also discussions of the issue have taken place on neutral territory (Ratha-yatras). Thus stalemate continues. But if we all increase *harinama sankirtana*, we will be cooperating to advance Lord Caitanya's movement for the satisfaction of guru and Gauranga.

An Open Letter to the GBC Gauridasa Pandita Dasa Las Vegas, NV, USA

I wrote an open letter to the GBC and I was thinking the best way to send it out would be to have it printed in *Priti-laksanam*. There is no other publication in ISKCON today that would be suitable for this purpose. I hope you will decide to print it. Devotees all over the world are debating the *guru* issue. It won't go away. It would be better for the movement if this issue was discussed at the GBC level where it can be resolved once and for all. Srila Prabhupada didn't want all of the devotees to argue over the *guru* issue.

Some devotees have been banned for exercising their opinions. Where is our freedom of speech? I hope it still exists in *Priti-laksanam*.

My intention is to research what Srila Prabhupada said for the future of ISKCON and not to find fault. As Henry Ford said, "Let's find solutions, not problems."

Dear GBC Members,

Please accept my respectful obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada! I would like to humbly request you to have a meeting on the *guru* issue. This

was the resolution of the North American GBC meeting held in San Diego in January of 1990. To date, no such meeting has taken place.

It has been 20 years since Srila Prabhupada left the planet, and still there is a lot of confusion on his final instructions on initiations in ISKCON. The debate goes on practically daily around the world. This would be better to be discussed in an open forum at the GBC level. The GBC needs to consider the matter in detail and then publish and practice the ultimate conclusion. This will bring more unity to ISKCON. I believe the movement could grow faster if the GBC would take action. If no action is taken, then the politics will continue at the grass roots level all over the world. The movement will split more and more with devotees joining other groups outside of ISKCON. You should judge a thing by its result. We are needing the love and trust that Srila Prabhupada founded this movement on. Let us cooperate and understand Srila Prabhupada's instructions. Let's make ISKCON the house where the whole world will want to live again.

Please kindly put the guru issue on the next GBC meeting and allow those interested to take part. Only good will come of it. This is an issue that won't go away, but only the GBC can resolve the matter for the benefit of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON. We need to communicate and cooperate to strengthen this great movement. If not, it will only split up more and more. We owe it to Srila Prabhupada to manage his movement nicely and we must cooperate to do this.

I pray this request doesn't fall on deaf ears. I was one of Srila Prabhupada's servants in that last summer of 77, and I personally heard Srila Prabhupada talk about ISKCON after his departure. So far, to this day, no GBC has interviewed me on this information. It makes me

wonder if the truth is really wanted or not. Please show me that you do want the truth and the best for ISKCON.

I will make myself available to you and am looking forward to your contact.

Hoping this meets you all well,
Yours in the service of Srila Prabhupada

Gauridasa Pandita Dasa
P.O. Box 98116
Las Vegas, NV 89193-8116, USA

ISKCON Table Manners Dharmapada Dasa Brazil

It's high time we changed them. Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with them; it's just that the *karmis* don't understand our table manners such that they are interfering with the preaching. Specifically, the way we devotees sit on the floor while eating, the way we use our fingers, and the utensils that we use.

I'll give an example or two in order to exemplify the problem. Once, a nondevotee lady was invited to a Janmastami celebration at a farm community, accompanied by a devotee. At *prasadam* time, the devotees lined up in rows along the floor. The devotee servers ran from one person to the next, serving *prasadam* onto the plates, such that the juice from the vegetable preparations ran together with the other preparations. That was not actually a big problem. But no plastic silverware was served. They had run out, and the devotees all ate with their fingers. Even though they do this in India, the Hindus are adept at it; they can do so without touching their fingers to their mouths or dirtying their fingers because this is a part of their culture. In this case, the lady was repulsed by seeing the devotees eat with their fingers. But that wasn't all. The lady watched a devotee enter the temple room with a big tray of *mahaprasad*. The entrance was directly from outside. The devotee took off his shoes with one hand

while he suspended the tray, and proceeded to indiscriminately toss *mahaprasad* onto the awaiting plates with the same hand! She was horrified by this, as well as by seeing the devotees eat with their hands and by the fact that the devotees let all the *prasad* mix together. The preaching definitely backfired and she formed a negative opinion of the devotees.

On another occasion, I witnessed the reactions of a family that took *prasad* with devotees at a farm community. There was a type of *bhoga mandir* which was rustic, but nice, and a few metallic folding tables which were there specifically for visitors who aren't used to eating on the ground. The floor was of fine cement, the kind they use indoors in buildings. The family all sat together at a couple of tables and this is what they saw. The devotees were sitting in rows on the floor eating off of banged up aluminum plates, which didn't look so nice, but that wasn't the problem. There was a slightly heated discussion between a devotee "quartermaster" and a devotee who didn't have a plastic spoon. It seemed that all of the devotees carried plastic spoons with them so that the temple didn't have to buy new spoons all the time. And the "quartermaster" didn't want to distribute any more spoons to this particular devotee because he had already used a whole bunch of them, or something on that order. All of this was seen and heard by the family and I know that it looked ugly, as well as sitting on a dusty cement floor, with no table underneath the plates and no mat to sit on.

The point is that ISKCON table manners are strange to the nondevotees and our manners alienate them and hurt the preaching effort. I saw things nicely done in Calcutta once, whereby nice mats, little tables, stainless steel plates and silverware were passed out with restaurant efficiency and a high level of cleanliness. But that was an exception to the

rule.

Our poor adaptation of Vedic table manners is not an intrinsic part of the philosophy or practice of Krishna consciousness. I don't understand why some sort of compromise between East and West hasn't been thought of yet, but that's the way it is. In relation to book distribution, the movement made compromises early on in order to increase the preaching. When I first joined the movement, the devotees would never have thought of running around in *karmi* clothes to sell books, hiding the fact that they are devotees. But a compromise was made in order to increase the number of books sold. Why can't we now make some similar arrangements in our table manners so as not to alienate the nondevotees when they visit us? No wonder they think we're a cult.

From now on, I think there should be nice tables to eat on in the ISKCON dining areas, with nice plates, cups, spoons, forks, knives and napkins. And I did say "nice." Some standard book of etiquette should be made reference to as far as manners are concerned. I think devotee families should be encouraged to eat as family units in their own dwellings, because nobody pays attention to things better than when those things are their own things! Of course, nobody pays attention to ISKCON dining rooms or plate cupboards. They don't belong to anybody! The dining situation in the movement is a mess for the same reasons that the temple bathrooms are always a mess. Communal living and socialism don't work. We're not on such a pure platform that we can always do the proper thing out of philosophical motives. We might want to consider harnessing a healthy self-interest if we are going to be functional as a society. A householder woman who takes pride in her own kitchen, her own dining room, her own china, et cetera, can make the kind of good impression on visitors that

our society's dining areas, product of communal and socialistic management, have been unable to do.

And if we do harness some self interest and depend on ownership to engender responsibility, I don't think we would have to be afraid of becoming attached, or anything like that. I wouldn't even see much of a problem if such a householder woman started thinking she was the doer. At whatever level we're at, we should simply serve to the best of our abilities, and advancement will come in due course of time. Could it be that we are so artificial about our lifestyle that we can't even get our table manners right and we end up alienating people? Is this what Srila Rupa Goswami means in *Nectar of Devotion* when he mentions that acting on an artificial platform is a cause of falldown?

So let's observe "exterior" table manners and consider a modified form of self interest, the kind which ownership engenders. At least let's start dialoguing along these lines. Maybe our bureaucratic and slow GBC will get around to addressing the issue and make some pronouncements and set some standards for reference. Once this happens, the problem will be on its way to a solution.

POETRY

Vegavati Dasi
Port Royal, PA, USA

Character flaws
Chanting and ruminating, as day
turns to night, and wondering what it
will
take to remove from this basically happy
heart
certain pervasive character flaws
that seem to me, seem to be, an integral
part of the pot. I know they're not.
Will it help to pause and try to recall

the cause and effect of these unwanted
things?

Or is it simpler and sweeter to open my
heart
and my mouth and my voice and sing?
And let the holy name carry them away,
far away, like something Garuda drops
from
a high place, let them smash on the stone
below,
safe in the shelter of his strong wings.
Or will I have to take birth and die
again be a little bird learning to fly,
again have for hands, furry paws with
claws,
tasting the fruit of my vain pursuit
in this life, pride and greed and desire
for things I know in my heart I don't
really need,
all because I wouldn't let go
of these icky, sticky character flaws?

Numberless Neurotics
Just one among the numberless
neurotics of this age,
voicing an old complaint:
Please notice me,
encourage me, a nod
or a smile from a Vaishnava
like you
could help so much—
even a glance—
just so I know you know
I'm still here.
Haven't fallen off
the end of the world,
at least not yet.



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Priti-laksanam

P.O. Box 238, Alachua, FL 32616, USA
904-462-5054, Fax: 904-462-5056
email: 102622.3526@compuserve.com

PERSONALS

Wanted: A good wife for life. Sane and healthy, please. Follow four regulative principles. Must want children and be willing to move to my home in S. Oregon (near coast). I want an

equal, not a slave. Please, no anti-Catholics, no cat lovers, U.F.O., astrology, "channeling," psychics, New Age alternative medicine, or other fanatics. I'm a private, middle-road person, not a public preaching type. I try to serve Krishna and Srila Prabhupada by helping my disabled *sannyasi* father and my exhausted sister who has 11 kids. (No, they don't live with me!) I began *gurukula* in Texas in 1973. I'm now 28-years-old and have been steadily employed since age 17. I'm a former police reserve officer and security guard with two years of college in criminal justice. By nature, I'm a *ksatriya* and I've always loved Hanuman. I also like nature's beauty, classical music, bicycling, excellent movies, plays, and literature. I enjoy old fashioned family fun with children and friends. I hope to have my own home business someday. If you want a faithful, devoted husband who loves Krishna and Christ, I may be your man. Write Saranga Dasa c/o E.O.H.N., Box 863, Coquille, OR, 97423, US. (21)

...

ISKCON Life Member, 34 years old, single, college-educated male seeking Krishna conscious wife. I have been in the association of devotees for over 12 years. I follow most of the principles of devotional life and chant on a regular basis. I'm into astrology, Krishna conscious rock & roll, FOLK programs, interfaith discussions, as well as writing and preaching Krishna consciousness at the introductory level. I have many plans for services, and need a wife (partner, not a servant) to help me. Please write me: Vasu Murty, 30 Villanova Lane, Oakland, CA 94611, USA. (27)

...

Indian Life Member of ISKCON for over a decade, active, in good health and spirit seeks Hindu or Hindu convert wife—young, healthy, loving, obedient, sincere, devoted, and complimentary. I am 49 years, divorced, in export/import business, financially independent, seeking relocation, and the most dharmic lifestyle as a householder in creative fulfilling and mutually beneficial relationship for the benefit of all beings, sentient and nonsentient. I have varied interests in the arts, media, and social

Priti-laksanam 39

work. Correspond with returnable photograph to Dhruv Dalmia, 199, Golf Links, New Delhi 110003, India. Tel/Fax 91-11-4617515. Every letter will be answered. Haribol! (25)

...

Parents seeking betrothal, then marriage for teenage daughter, born in the movement, predominantly home schooled or *gurukula*. Raised mostly in the countryside, loves nature and Krishna. Slightly hippieish, but serious with boundaries and strict in four regs. Musical, likes classical (Mozart, etc.), New Age, Vaishnava, and 60s music. Philosophical and light, both. Looking for good devotee man, age 21-25, who follows four regs, morning program, 16 rounds daily. Not interfaith or hodgepodge, but into Srila Prabhupada. Responsible with job, career, or paying service. Good natured. No hard core, fanatic, or fringe. Visiting here best. Write first, sincere inquiries only. Send to friend, Bhaktin Marie, RR #1 NBU #7, Moundsville, WV 26041, USA. (21)

...

Male, businessman, age 39 Bengali devotee. Divorced, two children ages 9 and 10. US citizen, settled in the US. Own realestate. Correspondence invited from sincere and loyal female devotee. Kumar Dasa, 6510 Horsepen Rd., Richmond, VA 23226; fax/phone: 804-673-9640. (22)

...

31-year-old initiated temple devotee (feminine nature, quiet, gentle, likes cooking, *bhajans*, Srila Prabhupada's books. From Eastern Europe, looking for a husband who wants to follow the regulative principles, has good sadhana, wants Krishna conscious family. Write c/o Sarmistha Dasi, 4327-B Alan Dr., Baltimore, MD 21229, USA; 410-247-9217. (22)

...

Male, 44, 5ft 10in, 125#, in ISKCON since 1972. Never married, 4.5 years in India. Adventurous, playfull, philosophically minded. Seeking compatable girl for marriage. Address: Ron Porterfield (Kamalasan Dasa), 2649 Benvenue Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704 (24)

Friendly relationship desired. I am a male disciple of Srila Prabhupada seeking a serious relationship and female friend. You are intelligent, attractively dressed, and sincere. I am, but don't wear dresses. Reply to Joe Masters (Jitamrtyu Dasa), P.O. Box 91005, San Diego, CA 92169, USA. (23)

...

Neither feminist nor doormat. 27-year-old *mataji*, ISKCON initiated. Devotee 9 years, strict 4 regs, *japa*, reading, Deity worship. Interests include painting, cooking, beaches, fun parks. Looking for devotee husband 30-35 with similar situation, interests. Must be mature, sensitive. Debra Manuel, P.O. Box 429, Kumeu, Auckland, New Zealand. (22)

...

46-year-old Anglo-Irish devotee, 16 rounds a day plus 4 regulations. Divorced, star sign Virgo, 5ft 5in. Sincere, considerate, practical, G.S.O.H. Likes art, reading, cooking, gardening, countryside, photography. Looking for Krishna conscious wife, preferably American, uninitiated, astrological sign Earth, artistic, gentle, 30-38. Please send photo. Bh. Peter Mitchelangelo, 89 Holmes Road, London NW5 3AU, England. (21)

...

Seeking a second generation Krishna conscious western female (*gurukula* schooling preferred) to unite in matrimonial bliss! I am 30, six feet, fair complexion, born in a *brahmana* family in Madras, India, and brought up with its rich cultural, traditional, and devotional values. Living in US since 91, well-established engineer with a Masters Degree in Electrical Engineering, familiar with ISKCON, its lifestyle and values for a long time. Well-rounded personality with a good balance of spiritual and material aspects in life, possess varied interests ranging from kite-flying to philosophy. Please call Ganesh, 504-441-7342 or email: gaachu@webtv.net to have a happy, fulfilling, and devotional married life till death do us apart! (22)

LINE ADS

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...

Women Speak Out A newsletter about women protection. Informative, educational, resources, letters, self-esteem. Free sample. RR#1, Box 319, Moundsville, WV 26041, USA. (21)

...

Prabhupadanuga This Newsletter for Uniting Srila Prabhupada's Family includes information on how to encourage devotees to associate, news on reunions, plus articles on philosophy and issues pertinent to bringing devotees closer to one another. Contact the editor, Jnana Dasa, at 108 Melbourne Road, Bushey, Herts WD23NE, UK; phone: 44-81-386-1247; or Centennial Office, P.O. Box 1987, Alachua, FL 32615, USA.

...

Help Inspire Involvement in Chanting for Unity by all forms of Lord Caitanya's movement forming *sankirtana* parties that perform routinely at nearby tourist hubs, or travel out occasionally to the nooks and crannies of America. Send photos (color, b&w, slides, prints, negs) with the name of party and activities to *Hare Krishna World*, P.O. Box 238, Alachua, FL 32616, USA. (20)

...

New Book: How to Start and Maintain a Devotee Support Team; a spiritual workbook, the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, and the 12 Steps to Recovery, by Svayamjata Dasa. 162 pages, \$20 plus \$3 shipping. Checks to: Raymond Spahn, 17091 Via Flores, San Lorenzo, CA 94580, USA; 510-317-9013. (21)

...

Betrayal of the Spirit, My Life behind the Headlines of the Hare Krishna Movement, by Nori J. Muster (Nandini dasi). For an

autographed copy, send \$25 to N. Muster, P.O. Box 41750, Mesa, AZ 85274 (postage paid in U.S.; for airmail to Canada & Mexico add \$3; all other countries add \$11; add \$4 extra for registered mail.) If this is a gift, please tell me how you want it signed. On the internet, visit NoriLand at <www.bhakti.com/nori> (21)

...

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...

Chanting for Unity: Promoting unity among Srila Prabhupada's family, as well as unity with the rest of the Caitanya tree of devotees in America through public chanting. (21)

...

Namananda Travelling Sankirtana Party accepts donations, inquiries c/o 160 Tibbett St., Athens, GA 30601, USA; 706-353-8180. (21)

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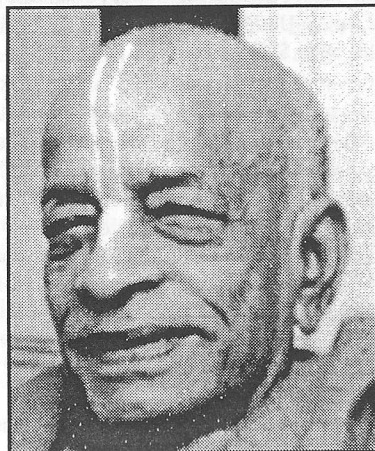
foster devotee babies and children. Please contact us if you are interested in serving Krishna by opening your heart in this way, or if you or someone you know needs to find a good home for a child. Radha Pessin Selvester, P.O. Box 1090, Alachua, FL 32616, USA; 904-462-7475; fax: 904-462-7909

...

Project Future Hope is the job and apprenticeship network for Vaishnava youth worldwide. Contact us with details: a) you can offer employment or training in employable skills; b) you are a Vaishnava youth seeking to learn employable skills and work in a devotee environment. Project Future Hope, P.O. Box 1425, Culver City, CA 90232, USA.

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Prabhupada Nectar Project Record your remembrances of Srila Prabhupada on cassette or type on disk and send, along with an old devotee photo of yourself to the Prabhupada Nectar Project. Include your personal realizations, dreams, or other nectar for posterity. Please send attn: Aditi Dasi c/o the North American Centennial Office, P.O. Box 1987, Alachua, FL 32615; 1-800-205-6108 (toll free NA only).



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