

AJAMILA PRABHU

Female Diksha Gurus - "Yes. But, Not So Many." Sp

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By Ajamila dasa ACBSP

Recently a small group of devotees have been asserting that ISKCON was not meant to have any female diksha gurus. In essence their rationalization in one particular article consists of a string of varnashrama dharma quotes and supporting explanations. On the one side they hammer home with carefully selected quotes the traditional restrictive nature of Stree Dharma for women and on the other they calculatedly fail to mention at all any of Srila Prabhupada's contemporary Preaching Dharma instructions for women. In that article any independent ISKCON women are, sadly, scolded as, quote, "feminists", even though such independence is forced upon many innocent women owing to much abuse from irresponsible men who are not at least equally reprimanded.

The article supports a small group's recent demands to the GBC to remove the existing sastrically verified GBC resolution that allows a qualified ISKCON woman to seek a no objection to become a diksha guru from a panel of 10 peers of the GBC. They claim there is no sastric evidence to support such a GBC resolution and that having female diksha gurus is nothing but a serious deviation from Srila Prabhupada's 'pure' teachings. But herein (see the quotes below) I prove with crystal clear evidence from Srila Prabhupada that they are very much mistaken.

It so happens that some of the group are leading members of the GHQ organization (unauthorized by ISKCON) that calls any responsible independent ISKCON preaching women hurtful insulting names that cannot be mentioned herein. This is also very sad. And moreover they also publicly criticize the ISKCON and GBC leadership, accusing them of seriously deviating from Srila Prabhupada's instructions on 'many issues', one of which is the topic of the female diksha guru which we examine herein.

If you take the time to go through ALL of Srila Prabhupada's instructions on the topic of female diksha guru you'll find he said:

NO THEY DEFINITELY CANNOT - when referring to Stree Dharma's ancient traditions; and

YES THEY DEFINITELY CAN - when referring to his unique Preaching Dharma in our modern tradition.

So which is it? It's BOTH !

Srila Prabhupada emphasized Stree Dharma for women, and in all the discussions thus far no one has ever denied that. But Srila Prabhupada further 'added' Preaching Dharma to Stree Dharma for our modern tradition like only he could do as the Founder Acarya of ISKCON. So why do a minority group of devotees deny the existence of all SP's instructions on Preaching Dharma? Traditionally women would

rarely be front line preachers, but Srila Prabhupada changed that for expanding his preaching movement. In the said article that opposes FDG, readers are given carefully selected quotes, giving you only HALF the picture. Herein you will get the FULL picture.

The gist of the article is that SP wanted ISKCON women to follow nothing else other than Stree Dharma because it is a most important part of varnashrama dharma without which all else will fail. Those opposing FDG have stated over the years that aside from being a perfect submissive wife engaged only in cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children ISKCON women should not take on any other higher roles of responsibility. They state that women should never be independent, they cannot get a proper education or take up any profession, and more to the point that becoming a female diksha guru is just totally out of the question regardless of what SP said about it. I could not agree more that certain Stree Dharma principles should be implemented in ISKCON as much as possible, but in a practical and balanced way that does not totally eliminate SP's Preaching Dharma instructions for women. In the recent article the author has carefully selected quotes to give you his predetermined preference of women following Stree Dharma only. But quite simply Srila Prabhupada wanted more.

What the article fails to tell us is that SP specifically stated many times that all women should whenever and wherever preach Krishna consciousness harmoniously 'along with' following Stree Dharma. And SP further added that if a few women were QUALIFIED they could be diksha gurus and take disciples. SP specifically said yes, quote, "But, not so many.", (See reference below.) indicating that a least a small number of his female disciples could become diksha guru. In the quotes I have provided below you'll see what a small group of devotees don't want you to see - direct statements from SP where he clearly states that if a few women are qualified they can be diksha gurus. They contradict Srila Prabhupada's overall conclusion on female diksha guru. They attempt to hammer women into a restrictive corner with Stree Dharma quotes that limit all ISKCON women to non-preaching and non-professional roles. But that was clearly not what Srila Prabhupada intended.

The fact is that although in traditional Vedic culture women should not have any independence they are in this Kali Yuga forced to become independent because of so many irresponsible men in ISKCON. This was a fact when Prabhupada was physically present, it's still a fact today, and it's not likely to go away in the future. When such ISKCON women are abandoned by irresponsible men they are forced to develop a career in order to survive and independently take nice care of their children. In many cases such women become successful and give back to ISKCON various valuable services and some very positive preaching. And some end up being sufficiently qualified to be an ISKCON guru. Yet on this topic of FDG a minority group vociferously disagree with FDG for reasons known best to them. They are very adamant that such so called 'feminists' cannot be gurus or take on any higher responsibilities even if they are highly qualified. But Srila Prabhupada's preaching vision was all encompassing. He gave us a clear guideline - when it comes to who can be a guru or take on a position of any service for Krishna it simply comes down to who is QUALIFIED, QUALIFIED, QUALIFIED! It has nothing to do with gender or any other consideration. (See the quotes from Srila Prabhupada below.)

I sincerely applaud certain devotees' enthusiasm and attempts to follow 'strictly' Srila Prabhupada's instructions on Stree Dharma. But leaks from their secret meetings have revealed that their hidden

agenda is to save ISKCON from 'womenization'. On many issues they drift so far to the right that their extreme views go well over a cliff. And that extreme position was certainly not Srila Prabhupada's way. Their views on many issues enter the treacherous land of nyamagraha or following lesser rules and regulations just for the sake of following them while losing sight of the higher preaching principles set by Srila Prabhupada. SP's preaching culture is higher than Vedic culture. Of course Stree Dharma should be implemented as much as possible but there is no reason why Stree Dharma and SP's unique Preaching Dharma cannot co-exist harmoniously in ISKCON just as SP intended. This will enable the preaching to expand very advantageously. What Srila Prabhupada created for us was a unique fusion of Vedic Culture and Preaching Culture, but those who oppose FDG mistakenly overly emphasize Vedic culture for women to an extreme that totally compromises SP's unique Preaching Culture.

That group opposing FDG imply that anyone who disagrees with their extreme right views is seriously deviating from Srila Prabhupada's 'pure instructions', stating things like ISKCON is not like it was when Srila Prabhupada was present. But expansion changes in a preaching mission are to be expected, ISKCON is expanding with no MAJOR philosophical discrepancies. The preaching is going on slowly but surely in a balanced way. But those opposing FDG see such balancing as a compromise because their views come in from such an extreme right nyamagraha wing.

For the very large majority of ISKCON women, following Stree Dharma should be the first and foremost training. And in a few cases, where a woman has all the qualifications, she can be a diksha guru just as Srila Prabhupada clearly intended. So what is the problem?

On the family grihastha issue, the same group is quick to heavily reprimand any independent woman but they never reprimand the irresponsible men who abuse and abandon such women in the first place. This particular group do not have the ability to represent Srila Prabhupada in a balanced way - on so many issues they come in from an extreme far right. And whoever disagrees with their extremism are accused of seriously deviating from Srila Prabhupada's instructions. This was exemplified recently when such extreme right views were made known in public on the internet. In defiance of the GBC, they accuse them of seriously deviating from Srila Prabhupada's instructions on various issues such as FDG, and so on. This is sad because such extremism cannot be upheld by guru, sadhu, and sastra.

Srila Prabhupada's statement in 1976 on this very issue of female diksha guru was that it is all about QUALIFICATION, QUALIFICATION, QUALIFICATION, not gender or anything else. What follows is the sastric evidence to prove this point. For reasons known best to them, those opposing FDG do not want you to see these following Preaching Dharma quotes from Srila Prabhupada:

Srila Prabhupada:

"Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bona fide representative, can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bona fide spiritual master to spread Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world." (Srila Prabhupada letter to Madhusudan November 2, 1967)

Srila Prabhupada said, "ANYONE". Yet a small group of devotees opposing FDG have chosen to contradict Srila Prabhupada.

IN 1976, AFTER COMPLETING MOST OF HIS WRITINGS, SRILA PRABHUPADA SUPERSEDED EVEN ALL HIS IMPORTANT STREE DHARMA INSTRUCTIONS WITH HIGHER PREACHING INSTRUCTIONS FOR HIS QUALIFIED SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS TO BECOME DIKSHA GURUS:

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Toronto, June 18, 1976

Interview with Professors O'Connell, Motilal and Shivaram –

Prof. O'Connell: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?

Prabhupada: Yes. Jahnava devi was - Nityananda's wife.

Prabhupada: In our material world, is it any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she is qualified, she can become professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, if the woman understands Krsna consciousness perfectly, she can become guru.

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Srila Prabhupada clearly states that QUALIFICATION is the determining factor, not GENDER or anything else, as to who can be a guru in our line of disciple succession. It is crystal clear. He says, quote, "...she can become guru." Yet a small group of devotees opposing FDG have chosen to contradict Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada:

"I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program." (Letter to Hamsaduta on Jan 3, 1969)

Srila Prabhupada included his DAUGHTERS, he never ever said men only. Yet a small group of devotees opposing FDG have chosen to contradict Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada:

"My dear sons and daughters . . . Anyone who is coming to Krsna consciousness, he's not ordinary living being. Anyone who is connected with our movement, he's not ordinary living being. Actually, he's liberated soul. And I am very much hopeful that my disciples who are now participating today, even if I die, my movement will not stop, I am very much hopeful." (Sri Vyasa-puja Lecture, London, August 22, 1973)

Srila Prabhupada says his DAUGHTERS are not ordinary. Those with an anti women outlook have said that none of Srila Prabhupada's daughters were extraordinary. But what about Yamuna Devi Dasi? And there are many more fine examples of extraordinarily qualified women in ISKCON. Yet a small group of devotees opposing FDG have chosen to contradict Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada:

"Yes. All these nice boys and girls who have taken so seriously . . . To become spiritual master is not very difficult thing. You'll have to become spiritual master. You, all my disciples, everyone should become spiritual master. . . . Remain always a servant of your spiritual master and present the thing as you have heard. You'll be spiritual master. . . . So I hope that all of you, men, women, boys and girls, become spiritual master."

Srila Prabhupada specifically says ALL my disciples, EVERYONE, and BOYS and GIRLS should become spiritual master. He never ever excluded the women except when referring to ancient Stree Dharma which he subsequently overrided for preaching purposes as verified herein. Yet a small group of devotees opposing FDG have chosen to contradict Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada:

"Women in our movement can also preach very nicely. Actually male and female bodies, these are just outward designations. Lord Caitanya said that whether one is brahmana or whatever he may be if he knows the science of Krsna then he is to be accepted as guru." (Letter to Malati, December 25, 1974)

The above is yet another crystal clear example that Srila Prabhupada wanted his spiritual daughters to transcend Stree Dharma and become qualified to initiate disciples as a diksha guru. Yet a small group of devotees opposing FDG have chosen to contradict Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada:

"Every acarya has a specific means of propagating his spiritual movement with the aim of bringing men to Krsna consciousness. Therefore, the method of one acarya may be different from that of another, but the ultimate goal is never neglected. . . . The acarya must devise a means to bring them to devotional service. Therefore, although I am a sannyasi I sometimes take part in getting boys and girls married, although in the history of sannyasa no sannyasi has personally taken part in marrying his disciples . . . It is the concern of the acarya to show mercy to the fallen souls . . . we are thoroughly instructing both men and women how to preach, and actually they are preaching wonderfully . . . Both men and women are preaching the gospel of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Lord Krsna with redoubled strength . . . it is a principle that a preacher must strictly follow the rules and regulations laid down in the sastras yet at the same time devise a means by which the preaching work to reclaim the fallen may go on with full force." (Sri Caitanya-caritamrita, Adi-lila, 7.37-38, purport)

Srila Prabhupada therefore as the greatest acarya overrided the Stree Dharma principle for the sake of the higher principle of Preaching Dharma and so he instructed his qualified spiritual daughters to initiate disciples. Yet a small group of devotees opposing FDG have chosen to contradict Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada:

“Whether one is a brahmana, a sannyasi or a sudra—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Krishna.” (CC Mad 8.128)

Srila Prabhupada:

“A scholarly brahmana, expert in all subjects of Vedic knowledge, is unfit to become a spiritual master without being a Vaisnava, or expert in the science of Krsna consciousness. But a person born in a family of a lower caste can become a spiritual master if he is a Vaisnava, or Krsna conscious.” (Padma Purāna) (CC Mad 8.128)

Qualification, qualification, qualification....

Srila Prabhupada:

(The complete conversation with Professor O’Connell.)

Toronto, June 18, 1976

Interview with Professors O’Connell, Motilal and Shivaram –

Woman: Swamiji, would you say something about the place of women in your movement?

Prabhupada: There is no distinction between man and woman. That is clearly said in the Bhagavad-gita. Mam hi partha vyapasritya ye ‘pi syuh papa-yonayah striyo sudras tatha vaisyah [Bg. 9.32]. The first is mentioned, striya. Striyah sudras tatha vaisyah. These classes are understood to be less intelligent-woman, sudra, and the vaisyas. But Krsna says, “No, even for them it is open.” Because in the spiritual platform there is no such distinction, man, woman, or black, white, or big or small. No. Everyone is spirit soul. Panditah sama-darsinah [Bg. 5.18]. Vidya-vinaya-sampanne brahmane gavi hastini suni caiva svapake ca panditah [Bg. 5.18], one who is actually learned, he is sama-darsinah. He does not make any distinction. But so far our material body is concerned, there must be some distinction for keeping the society in order.

Woman: The women could become panditas, then.

Prabhupada: Oh, yes. Te ‘pi yanti param gatim. Not only come, she can also attain perfection. There is no such restriction. Krsna said.

Woman: Do you have any panditas in the Western movement?

Prabhupada: There are so many Western woman, girls, in our society. They are chanting, dancing, taking to Krsna consciousness. Of course, because superficially, bodily, there is some distinction, so we keep women separately from men, that’s all. Otherwise, the rights are the same.

Prof. O’Connell: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?

Prabhupada: Yes. Jahnava devi was-Nityananda's wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection.... Yei krsna-tattva-vetta sei guru haya [Cc. Madhya 8.128]. The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Krsna. Then he or she can become guru. Yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei guru haya. [break] In our material world, is it any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she is qualified, she can become professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, if the woman understands Krsna consciousness perfectly, she can become guru.

Indian man: Well, to understand Krsna consciousness, do you not require adhikari?

Prabhupada: Adhikari means he must agree to understand. That is adhikari. But we do not agree. That is our fault.

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End of quotes, but there are many more.

I hope the small group of devotees who contradict Srila Prabhupada's instructions on the female diksha issue will reconsider their narrow and sometimes very offensive outlook toward ISKCON women and in particular on the issue of a female diksha guru in light of the evidence I have presented herein from Srila Prabhupada.

Hoping this meets you well. Hare Krishna!!

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Comments • [comment feed]

1Kesava Krsna dasa

Part One:

I think it is incorrect to say that only the “extreme” factions oppose lady guruship. That is a generalisation. I have written in defence of women devotees against ‘conservative’ views, but I need to be convinced that there is a compelling case for lady guruship. I do not consider myself to be a ‘conservative’ the way it is depicted in this article.

Whenever Srila Prabhupada cited historical examples, we usually see only one unique and outstanding name mentioned - that of Sri Jahnava Mata. This is rare indeed.

The problem now is weighing Her example up in the modern era. Just as we can cite Her rarity, we can also cite the relative frequency of male gurus. The pressing issue here is why the urge to push for a position of guruship, whether pursued by males or females? Is there competitiveness in wanting to emulate what males already do?

Are there any records of Sri Jahnava Mata being granted guruship because she petitioned for it? That question alone would be an insult if applied to Her. Her greatness and all allied divine qualities earned Her that position, though She would not have sought it Herself. She was recognised as ‘self-effulgent.’ Hers is a “hard act to follow” so to speak. She was an exception, not the rule.

Why is it that a women devotee – or even a male – has to be a guru in order to preach? Preachers are already gurus. To date our women have done marvels in preaching terms for Iskcon. Unlike the ‘conservatives,’ I agree that our ladies should use their talents, experiences and qualifications in Krishna’s service.

But there is a Motherly role inherent that cannot go to waste. Western society has familiar loss of family values. As a backlash to exploitation, women pursue equal rights, which in turn cause loss of respect for women in general. Where there is a breakdown of respect for women, we in Iskcon can regain that.

Our women can be true role models for society. In Iskcon we allow our ladies to serve in progressive modern and academic ways. We need central role players within our midst as well, and that can be provided by our women as Mothers. The highly exalted position of Mother has not gotten to our heads yet. The absence of such respect causes an outlet in the form of petitioning for guruship.

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa.

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on November 24th, 2012

2Kesava Krsna dasa

Part Two:

Iskcon authority is dominated by the renounced order. This is not VAD in action. This domination leaves little room wherein women can function as Mothers. Any arguments in favour of VAD consideration of Motherhood is 'post-dated,' because only in the future will it get implemented.

The discussion has to focus on why it is that this urge is there. Our social set up is not compatible with having a central family role for Mothers when the renounced order is central in terms of general authority. Incompatibilities like these on a social level lead us to the problems and urges we are experiencing.

These will continue until our women find and are given a natural berth, as gurus, nourishers, nurturers, and all that Mothers should be. Think of potential for our ladies? They can continue to preach, teach, guide, and become exemplary beacons that lost families seek.

In the absence of VAD, our Iskcon is of necessity run with corporate organisational standards. Where does the central family Motherly role fit in? This lack of fitment is part of the reason why there is a seeking of compensation in the form of guruship.

If our women were given all due respect and are enabled to gift us with Motherly dues, we'll find that there will be enough respect and engagement, for they will be hailed as much as gurus, if not more. It does not take an official position as guru for this.

One can quote Srila Prabhupada and Sastra for and against lady guruship. What matters is whether to turn an 'exception' into a rule. The "not many" acknowledgement has to be measured with the self-effulgence and extreme rarity of Sri Jahnava Mata. When we see petitioning for this exceptional position, we have to be extra convinced.

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa.

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on November 24th, 2012

3Visakha Priya dasi

sri-kaurme—

virodho vakyayor yatra napramanyam tad isyate

yathaviruddhata ca syat tatharthah kalpyate tayoh

"In the Kurma-purana it is stated that an explanation of two apparently contradictory statements should leave no scope for ambiguity. Instead, an explanation which leaves no contradiction should be sought."

The latest issue of Shri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu explains that the above verse is quoted by Srila Rupa Goswami in Laghu-bhagavatamrta 5.327 in relation to a controversial statement from Visnu-dharmottara that says that all universes have the same life forms and similar-looking demigods. However, the story of Krishna inviting different-headed Brahmas to come before the Brahma of our

universe doesn't correspond with the account of Visnu-dharmottara. Rupa Goswami therefore states that if there seems to be contradictory statements in Vedic literature, they need to be reconciled without discarding any of them as inauthentic.

Comment posted by Visakha Priya dasi on November 24th, 2012

4Sita Rama 108

I agree with Kesava Krishna Prabhu's contention- it is not only extreme factions who oppose female Guruship. I do not think the problem lies in one group following Srila Prabhupada's instructions and one group distorting them. The conflict is produced from not integrating two seemingly incompatible principals; following VAD and transcending it at the same time.

With all due respect I think Kesava Krishna Prabhu's statement, "ISKCON authority is dominated by the renounced order", and Ajamila Prabhu's statement that Srila Prabhupada overrode the stree dharma principal for the sake of a higher principal of preaching, both show that they are missing the point- that there is a need to follow VAD and transcend it simultaneously. To be an initiating Guru in ISKCON does not require one to be part of a dominating authority. And we can very effectively participate in the higher principal of preaching without, "overriding", VAD culture.

So I believe we need to recognize that we are still challenged when we try to practically apply the concept of following rules meant for the smooth functioning of society while simultaneously applying the concept surrendering to Krishna only. It would be best if we recognize the need to work collectively in a dialogue which adds to each other understands of the real difficulty and put our heads together to come up with solutions to the external problem rather than thinking the problem is produced by one group or another.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on November 25th, 2012

5Sita Rama 108

I think I need to clarify what I meant by VAD in the comments above. I was simply referring to following authorities in a particular society. In other words one may have obligations to an employee, employer, wife, husband, children, laws of society, customs, etc. Also a devotee may be regulated by authorities at an ISKCON Temple such as the Kitchen Manger, Head Pujari, Temple President, etc. My point is one can become a pure devotee and initiating Guru regardless of how many practical authorities one has above, or below, them; the practical situation need not change. If we see men or woman desiring to become Guru's in order to increase their practical authority, that indicates ulterior motive. On the other hand if we see a current guru objecting to someone else becoming a guru, due to fear of sharing their practical power, we can infer that the one objecting has ulterior motives also.

In the Srimada Bhagavatam there are numerous examples of situations where there is the need to violate an obligation in order to follow a higher one. For instance the wives of the brahmana's did the right thing by once disobeying their husbands when they went to meet Krishna. Afterwards they returned home. Srila Visvanatha Cakravati Thakura, commented on SB 10,23, 42, "Therefore from that

day on the husbands accepted those ladies as their worshipable spiritual masters and no longer thought of them as their wives or property.” However they were instructed by Krishna to return and, “assist” their husbands in sacrifice. Therefore we can infer that there was no reverse in the structure of society. On the practical level they carried on in accordance with contemporary culture.

In general it takes maturity to choose correctly when facing duress from conflicting obligations. But ignoring a particular custom to follow a higher principal rarely justifies disregarding social customs per se. On the other hand it is hypocritical to expect any group to rigidly follow Vedic culture because, we all know, in Kali Yuga no one can follow all the rules of varna or ashrama.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on November 25th, 2012

6Paramananda das

Television Interview — July 9, 1975, Chicago

Woman reporter: There is one question I have for you. You say that a woman’s brain is smaller than a man’s.

Prabhupada:Woman?

Nitai:Woman’s brain is smaller than a man’s brain.

Prabhupada:Yes, that is a fact. In the history there is no woman who is a big philosopher, a big mathematician, big scientist, big educationist. We don’t find. They were all men.

Woman reporter:What about women who are leaders of countries such as your own country?

Prabhupada:Well, according to Vedic conception woman is never offered leadership. But experience has shown that woman’s leadership has not been successful.

Woman reporter:Do you think Mrs. Gandhi’s leadership has not been successful?

Prabhupada:Well, there is already trouble. There are many big, big men, they do not agree with her and she has taken emergency steps. So on the whole, the country is in trouble.

Woman reporter:What about Mrs. Meir, president of Israel?

Prabhupada:I do not say of any particular woman, but according to Vedic civilization, we have never seen in the history that woman has become a leader.

Woman reporter:Women have been leaders.

Prabhupada:They were not selected. The leader—formerly it was monarchy—the monarchs were selected by the advisory board of the first-class men. So they never selected any woman to become the leader of the society.

Woman reporter:What about women who are elected by the people?

Prabhupada:Well, people election... Just like you elected Nixon and then you wanted him to come down. So this kind of election has no value. Sometimes you elect and sometimes you pull down. So what is the value of this election?

Woman reporter:So a leader should not be elected.

Prabhupada:Elected, but not by this general public. They have no intelligence. They sometimes elect a wrong man, and again they try to drag him down. So what is the use of such election? Because that election is not sober, not mature. If the election was mature and sober, then there was no need of dragging him down again.

Woman reporter:We have talked to scientists who say that the size of the brain has nothing to do with intelligence. Do you believe that?

Prabhupada:I think that the scientists do not think like that. They keep the brain of a particular scientist to study. They keep the heart of a particular noble man. Why they try to study the heart and the brain if there is no difference?

Comment posted by Paramananda das on November 25th, 2012

7Unregistered

In reply to Kesava Krsna Prabhu:

In your part 1 reply you imply that no women in ISKCON are up to the standard of Sri Jahnava Mata. But who is qualified to judge that? What about Yamuna Devi Dasi? Srila Prabhupada said specifically that all his sons and daughters are not ordinary but you imply his daughters are ordinary. That's unfair.

Srila Prabhupada said:

Prabhupada: "There are so many Western woman, girls, in our society. They are chanting, dancing, taking to Krsna consciousness. Of course, because superficially, bodily, there is some distinction, so we keep women separately from men, that's all. Otherwise, the rights are the same."

Note SP states "otherwise the rights are the same". Are you implying all the ISKCON make gurus are also ordinary?

Hoping this meets you well. Hare Krishna!! ys ad

Comment posted by Ajamila on November 26th, 2012

8Unregistered

Visakha Priya dasi commented:

"Rupa Goswami therefore states that if there seems to be contradictory statements in Vedic literature, they need to be reconciled without discarding any of them as inauthentic."

I agree with this 100%. In my article I stated Srila Prabhupada's instructions on BOTH Stree Dharma and Preaching Dharma for women can be implemented harmoniously in ISKCON. And a resolution to that effect has been passed by the GBC to allow any qualified female to be a diksha guru.

But unfortunately there is a small group of devotees determined to totally restrict all women to Stree Dharma only, to not let any women who are qualified participate in any other services which they want to be reserved exclusively for men even though in some instances a woman might be many times more qualified. This is a sad mentality indeed.

Hoping this meets you well. Hare Krishna!!

ys

Ajamila Dasa acbsp

Comment posted by Ajamila on November 26th, 2012

9Unregistered

Sita Rama Prabhu's essential comment:

"With all due respect I think Kesava Krishna Prabhu's statement, "ISKCON authority is dominated by the renounced order", and Ajamila Prabhu's statement that Srila Prabhupada overrode the stree dharma principal for the sake of a higher principal of preaching, both show that they are missing the point- that there is a need to follow VAD and transcend it simultaneously."

Good points, but Srila Prabhupada did give far more emphasis to 'preaching' rather than 'VAD'.

That is not to say VAD should be minimised, although I can post many quotes where VAD is minimised compared to transcendence whereas you'll not find any quotes where preaching is ever minimised.

So I therefore disagree when you stated I missed the point - "that there is a need to follow VAD and transcend it simultaneously."

You appear to have missed my statement which agrees with your statement:

"Of course Stree Dharma should be implemented as much as possible but there is no reason why Stree Dharma and SP's unique Preaching Dharma cannot co-exist harmoniously in ISKCON just as SP intended. This will enable the preaching to expand very advantageously."

We are in agreement.

Hoping this meets you well. Hare Krishna!!

ys

Ajamila Dasa acbsp

Comment posted by Ajamila on November 26th, 2012

10tulasi-priya

My suggestion: Establish programs to teach new converts what guru actually means, train them in critical thinking skills so they're not swayed by emotion and peer pressure, and emphasize that the guru-disciple relationship is a very personal one, not a cult of personality and charisma. It's not an issue of male or female guru, it's a matter of who inspires you, and the relationship you have with them. The person who may actually get you back to Godhead might not be the "big gun" (with a thousand disciples) sitting on the vyasasana who you see only once a year, but the humble soul in the kitchen who has patiently answered all your questions and soothed all your doubts every day since you came off the street as Bhakta or Bhaktin Nobody, looking for shelter.

Comment posted by tulasi-priya on November 27th, 2012

11Kesava Krsna dasa

Part One:

Ajamila Prabhu,

The contention is that none of our lady devotees – nor our men for that matter – are ordinary. Being in touch with the power of Bhakti makes them extraordinary, and beyond.

I agree that our ladies and Mothers are all extraordinary, but do not require an official position to confirm this. To put things into context, Jahnava Mata was the wife of God – Sri Nityananda Prabhu. Her position automatically is a Mother status. This is not an "unfair" comparison.

Mother Yamuna Devi is for me, a Mother. As a Mother, she is automatically a guru, teacher, and much more. It did not require an official diksa guru title for her to earn my affection and great respect.

Sometimes Saci Mata is referred to as the Mother of the entire universe. Sometimes Sita Thakurani is as well. Mother Malati – Sri Srivasa Thakur's wife - played Mother to Sri Nityananda Rama (Chaitanya Bhagavata). In all these instances they are called MOTHER, not diksha gurus.

I am somewhat confused by your linguistic juxtaposition of words as if to include or imply that men fall into the same unordinary category as women. By "rights," we have to consider both male and female roles in society, and within Iskcon in particular.

In terms of the Mother role, all women have definite rights that men cannot impinge upon. Men cannot emulate Mothers. Whereas men might assume the title of diksa guru, our senior, learned and experienced women need not assume that title, for they should already be respected as guru in Motherhood.

If our women are not being respected as Mothers should, and they have to petition for guruship to compensate, then it reveals how our Iskcon social structures are not facilitating this. Iskcon can lead the world in versatile Motherhood that society craves, but first our social needs must be addressed.

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa.

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on November 27th, 2012

12Kesava Krsna dasa

Part Two:

When Mothers are as they are, then what Tulasi Priya Mataji has written applies. These 'anonymous' forms of help in the kitchens or corridors are where wisdom and affection prosper. A Mother does not have to be a diksa guru to teach a Bhakta how to de-core or slice veggies and fruit, or to memorise a sloka.

Reconciling with apparent opposites, as Vishaka Mataji has posted, requires us to see what is best in between the yes and no sides of this discussion that cite Sastra and Srila Prabhupada. This means finding out what is best for Iskcon on a practical level.

I may be presumptuous here, but I think that if we acknowledge that the Guru role is awarded both to our male and female devotees according to tradition, we will find that males are awarded diksa, but our Mother do not need this award – they already are diksa, sikska, preachers, parents, teachers, lecturers etc.

If we see this, how Mothers and male gurus are gurus in their own rights, then this should be the reconciling factor to bridge the apparent divide, difficult as it may sound in modern times.

Having said this, I would like to be convinced otherwise, and I am open to being persuaded.

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa.

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on November 27th, 2012

13Kesava Krsna dasa

Let us ask ourselves some important questions: Is the position of Mother not good enough a title or role – whichever we prefer – for our lady devotees? Is it that diksa guru sounds higher or more important than Mother?

Since the role of Mother is being minimised in 'progressive' societies, do we in Iskcon have to mirror this? In some ways, because our social structures are not fully in place, we already have situations where the exalted position of Mother cannot be expressed. A way to overcome this is through petitioning for lady guruship.

Being recognised as Mothers who can give classes and perform other essential services for Iskcon, why is it that “Mother” is seen as subservient? Do we need to educate in order to revive the importance of Mother?

Iskcon is quite progressive in many areas, including elements of women ‘empowerment.’ Is there a limit to how far we as Iskcon can go with such ‘modernity’ if there is a possible risk of diluting age-old time tested traditions? Are there times when we have to put our foot down and say “enough?”

Are we thinking hard about potential repercussions of actions we might take today because they happen outside of Iskcon? And what precedent is set? Is there a risk of making Iskcon appear too ‘progressive’ so as to lose respect, and not be very different in substance to any other grouping branding itself as Vedic?

Is there a line that has to be drawn that can safeguard tradition and progression, without compromising of enlightened standards steeped in history?

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa,

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on November 27th, 2012

14Unregistered

PART I of III

Dear Ajamila Prabhu,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

It is good that this matter is now coming out in the open for discussion so members of ISKCON can have an idea of these FDG resolutions which were discussed and passed with no knowledge of the general mass of devotees.

Small Group?

Firstly although it is definitely what some people would wish, this is not a small group. There are ALOT of devotees in ISKCON who feel that this is a step in the wrong direction. It’s just that not all of them will be writing about it or discussing it online. For example majority of devotees in India and Russia who make up an extremely large bloc in ISKCON don’t know English and so won’t be writing or reading articles on Dandavats. What is their opinion? In my opinion in India (the land of culture, religion and civilization according to Srila Prabhupada), they wouldn’t be too happy about it. One supporting fact about this claim is the message that the RGB of India passed to the GBC about this stating their opposition to FDG. Again we cannot just ignore their opinion as they represent the largest bloc of devotees in the ISKCON.

Only GHQ members opposing FDG ?

I don't know what GHQ is but all I will say is that there is a big cross section of persons opposed to this idea. Practically anyone who is regularly reading Srila Prabhupada's books and assimilated his true mood and message would be quite taken aback by this proposal. Srila Prabhupada time and again wrote so much about how a woman should be protected and not be independent. Granted that perhaps we are not at the stage to follow all these practices now, but to endeavour to institutionalize FDG means going against the whole teaching of how Srila Prabhupada wanted to model the human society. Actually for quite some time now there have been exchanges between you and a WOMAN bodied devotee who OPPOSES this idea on an online forum. Also on various other forums up until yesterday I have seen postings by women bodied devotees who are staunchly against this idea. I don't think they are in this 'GHQ'. So as I said although some people would wish it, this is NOT A SMALL GROUP of people who oppose FDG.

CONTINUED>>>

Comment posted by Murari Das on November 28th, 2012

15Unregistered

PART II of III

Well informed and thought out opinions based on Srila Prabhupada's teachings and his (SP's) desire for developing VAD.

The various opinions and views expressed by many different devotees should not be lumped together as simply abusive extremist personalities. I think one of the main articles you are referring to is the one titled Gurudevis and Grandmothers by HH Bhakti Vikasa Swami. This article was written very logically and not in any way abusive to Women. Maharaja actually begins the article by stating that

"Undoubtedly, several senior women devotees in our movement are as learned, dedicated, and in other ways spiritually qualified as many of their godbrothers."

So these are not extremist but in fact realistic and based on Srila Prabhupada's teachings and books. I challenge you to find any part of that article which is not from Srila Prabhupada's teachings.

Sad Mentality?

You wrote

But unfortunately there is a small group of devotees determined to totally restrict all women to Stree Dharma only, to not let any women who are qualified participate in any other services which they want to be reserved exclusively for men even though in some instances a woman might be many times more qualified. This is a sad mentality indeed.

Again you said 'small'. Perhaps we should start an online petition so that you can see how small a group we are. In reply to the comment above I will say that this is not our opinion it is the opinion of His Divine Grace. Srila Prabhupada stressed many times that the best way for a woman to be happy and for society

to be in perfect functioning order, women should be protected and not left to be independent. This is because as a class they are easily misled and taken advantage of by unscrupulous men. We have seen this so many times even within our ISKCON. In fact Srila Prabhupada said in an interview that most men who were fighting for women's 'liberation' were lusty men who wanted to lure them out of their protective situations so that they could enjoy them.

The quotes by Srila Prabhupada about Women bodied Gurus should be taken in context based on all his other quotes regarding women's roles. Also there is a big difference between a very rare case of accepting a woman bodied spiritual leader and INSTITUTING the same. Actually instituting this is a very big step which will be unprecedented in the whole history of the sampradaya.

CONTINUED>>>

Comment posted by Murari Das on November 28th, 2012

16Sita Rama 108

Ajamila Prabhu,

Please accept my humble obeisances.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

I apologize. On the bright side, although the point I made did not add to your article, I might have reiterated an important aspect of it.

All I can say is I need to work on becoming a better listener. Work in progress.

Your servant,

Sita Rama das

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on November 28th, 2012

17Kesava Krsna dasa

Please allow me to make a correction to an earlier comment I posted, wherein in named Malati, and not Mother Malini as the wife of Sri Srivas Thakur. It is Mother Malini.

It may appear "unfair" that any comparison with today's lady devotees and the internal wives of four of the Pancha Tattva are made. It is not a comparison, or even a judgement. What makes true comparison less credible is the fact that there is petitioning for such positions as lady guru. This implies motivation for, I am sure many legitimate reasons, as our Iskcon social inadequacies reveal.

If these are what are driving such motivations, then we have to admit that trying to match someone like Sri Jahnava Mata falls short on merit. These social inadequacies also reveal uncertainties for our women devotees who seek all-round assurance and protection. Does this contribute to such motivations?

We usually see or use the term Mother for all great ladies or feminine energies of the Lord: Mother Parvati, Mother Sarasvati, Ma Durga and so on. In keeping with this tradition it would be wise, if in any event our ladies do become gurus, not to dispense with the Mother title. But I and many others have to be mightily convinced that there is a need for this.

Even if the 'preaching dharma' overrides all other considerations, we still have to 're-invent' as it were, the importance and necessity of true Motherhood to bond families, societies and yes, our Iskcon family, without which we shall remain dysfunctional on different levels.

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa.

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on November 28th, 2012

18Kulapavana

You do not become a guru by a decree or by approval from someone. You become a guru when people naturally come to you to learn and to be inspired by your words and deeds in their spiritual life. Without real disciples there are no real gurus. We read in Caitanya Caritamrta: "guru krsna prasade paya" - "by the mercy of Krsna one gets guru". If Krsna directs someone in their heart to take shelter of a particular person, who are we to interfere with that flow of inspiration? Our society should simply teach new members how to distinguish between purity and impurity, what are the qualifications of a person who can teach them about Krsna, and make sure that those engaged in training of disciples are not abusing their position. There is obviously enough precedent in our tradition and in the teachings of our acharyas to accept women as gurus in ISKCON, and nobody should stand in the way of devotees who chose to accept a female guru, or in the way of lady devotees who want to act in the role of guru. Let these things flow in a natural fashion, without splitting hair over selected quotes. Hair splitting is not our tradition - our acharyas preached boldly, without succumbing to overly restrictive social and doctrinal canons. Let us not become smarta-Hare Krishnas. It is a lot better to be smart Hare Krishnas.

Comment posted by Kulapavana on November 30th, 2012

19Puskaraksa das

One can become guru when he is ordered by his guru - (Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 7.2 — Nairobi, October 28, 1975):

INDIAN MAN: When did you become the spiritual leader of Krishna consciousness?

PRABHUPADA: What is that?

BRAHMANANDA: He's asking, When did you become the spiritual leader of Krishna consciousness?

PRABHUPADA: When my Guru Maharaja ordered me. This is the guru-parampara.

INDIAN MAN: Did it...

PRABHUPADA: Try to understand. Don't go very speedily. A guru can become guru when he's ordered by his guru. That's all. Otherwise, nobody can become guru.

INDIAN WOMAN 2: (Hindi)

PRABHUPADA: (Hindi) Sadhi mam prapannam. "I am surrendered to you. Whatever you say, I shall carry out." That's all.

INDIAN MAN: When did he tell you to—

PRABHUPADA: What is the business, when did he tell me? And why shall I disclose to you? It is so very insignificant thing that I have to explain to you?

INDIAN MAN: No, I am just curious when—

PRABHUPADA: You should be curious within your limit. You should know that one can become guru when he is ordered by his guru, this much.

Srila Prabhupada Conversation, May 28, 1977, Vrindavan:

Prabhupada: "When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it."

"..The spiritual master must never be carried away by an accumulation of wealth or a large number of followers. A bona fide spiritual master will never become like that. But sometimes, if a spiritual master is not properly authorized, and only on his own initiative becomes a spiritual master, he may be carried away by an accumulation of wealth and large numbers of disciples. His is not a very high grade of devotional service. If a person is carried away by such achievements, then his devotional service becomes slackened. One should, therefore, strictly adhere to the principles of disciplic succession...."
The Nectar of Devotion - 1970 Edition : Nectar of Devotion (Unrevised edition) Chapter 14: Devotional Qualifications.

"Self-made guru cannot be guru. He must be authorized by the bona fide guru. Then he's guru. This is the fact...Similarly, bona fide guru means he must be authorized by the superior guru." (SP NOD Lecture, October 31. 1972)

"One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, who is authorized by his predecessor spiritual mastetr. This is called diksa-vidhana." (S.B. 4.8.54, purport)

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on December 1st, 2012

20Puskaraksa das

". . .He was first deputed by my Guru Maharaja, along with our late God Brother, Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Maharaja, to open a missionary center in London, and they stayed there for 3 years, but didn't make any appreciable advance. Except that spent enormous money of my Guru Maharaja, and later on they were called back to India. So that is a great history; it is not possible to say everything in this letter, but for the

present, be satisfied with these words, and later we shall talk more and more. On the whole, you may know that he is not a liberated person, and therefore, he cannot initiate any person to Krishna Consciousness. It requires special spiritual benediction from higher authorities.”

[Srla Prabhupada Letter to: Janardana — New York 26 April, 1968]

So, we can understand from the above that one has to be appointed by his own spiritual master, who himself is bona fide if he has been appointed as guru by his own spiritual master and so on and so forth. This is the Parampara system.

Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.29.17:

“In Bhagavad-gita, Thirteenth Chapter, it is clearly stated that one should execute devotional service and advance on the path of spiritual knowledge by accepting the acarya. Acaryopasanam: one should worship an acarya, a spiritual master who knows things as they are.. The spiritual master must be in the disciplic succession from Krsna. The predecessor of the spiritual master are his spiritual master, his grand spiritual master, his great-grand spiritual master and so on, who form the disciplic succession of acaryas.”

Hence, no one can appoint himself as guru, neither should one be prompted by his Godbrothers to take the position of the acarya. All the more, who could seriously consider that it is for a neophyte devotee to induce one to become guru, on the basis of his or her desire to become that person’s disciple...?

Besides, one should have become an acarya.

“We have to pick up the prominent acaryas, and follow from him.”

Srla Prabhupada Letter to Dayananda, April 12, 1968

Sri Jahnava Devi was none other than Revati Devi, the eternal consort of Sri Balarama. So, she was certainly qualified to act as spiritual master, as any nitya-siddha, any eternal resident of the spiritual world would naturally be.

So, it is not a matter of gender. It is rather a matter of being authorized and qualified, which one could summarize as the “A-QUA” process: “Authorization” and “Qualification”.

Sri Guru Parampara ki Jaya...!

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on December 1st, 2012

21pustakrishna

I had the good fortune of having a 16 year friendship with His Divine Grace Srla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Swami from 1992 until his passing several years ago. He always accepted me as Srla Prabhupad’s man, which I am always. But, we developed a very honest and friendly relationship, in that he developed an ashram here in Santa Cruz, California, and to a large extent, he also got me out of the doldrums and helped re-stimulate my devotional service. In any case, the reason for sharing this is to comment on the

issue of being “asked” to be guru and his approach to that invitation. In the 1980s when his gurudeva Srila Sridhar Maharaj (Srila Prabhupad’s Godbrother and close friend) was ill and with death approaching, Srila Sridhar Maharaj requested that Srila Govinda Maharaj (then not yet a sannyasi) take over his Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math mission. Srila Govinda Maharaj replied: “please choose someone else, I will serve them faithfully.” Srila Sridhar Maharaj insisted and told him that his disinterest in acquiring pratishtha (position) was in fact one of his qualifications. Thus, one can learn that one should not, in this context, aspire to become guru, but rather aspire to serve the vaishnava-acharya.

When we speak of “authorization”, we must consider whether the backing is real or counterfeit. If real, parampara, then the current will be genuine. This is the issue. So, one should have both quality and qualification. That is a very, very high order. Naturally, each and every one of us can humbly repeat what we have heard from our guru-vaishnavas and thus serve them. If we desire position, authority, abandoning the instruction of Sriman Mahaprabhu (amanina manadena), then that will be a disqualification.

I hope that the editors of Dandavats, for whom I have a great deal of respect and who I also wish to serve, will permit this offering because I know that it contains instructive comments for us all. All Glories to Srila Prabhupad. Pusta Krishna das

Comment posted by pustakrishna on December 1st, 2012

22Unregistered

PART III of III

Suniti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Maharaja’s diksa-guru.

(SB 4.12.32)

Your servant

Comment posted by Murari Das on December 2nd, 2012

23Unregistered

Ajamila said:

“In your part 1 reply you imply that no women in ISKCON are up to the standard of Sri Jahnava Mata. But who is qualified to judge that? What about Yamuna Devi Dasi? Srila Prabhupada said specifically that all his sons and daughters are not ordinary but you imply his daughters are ordinary. That’s unfair.

Jahnava mata was an incarnation of Anangamanjari, the younger sister of Srimati Radharani, she was in the category of Laxsmi tattva and married to a purusha Who was in category of Visnutattva—she could manifest four arms. Are you saying that Yamuna Mataji was in Laxsmitattva and could manifest four

arms? Are you seriously saying that anyone male or female in ISKCON is on this level? Let us be serious here.

Please state categorically if you think that Yamuna dd was Laxsmitattva.

Aside from that Yamuna dd is not one of the persons who is ambitiously campaigning to be a diksha guru. So why bring her up at all?

You say “who is qualified to judge that?” only someone who can tell if she has four arms. So better to be on the safe side and not do something we will regret later when we become sober. If you can’t tell what the qualification is of a person then you should not be promoting something that requires that the lady actually be an exception. As someone else wrote: “Exceptions to the rule must be exceptional.” And those exceptions should be obvious to everyone. It seems to me and a lot of others here that what is happening is that unexceptional ladies are being pushed forward and equated by you as equivalent to mother Jahnava–Laxsmitattva. And if someone complains that they are not exceptional according to strict definition you then retort “But are you qualified to judge?” There is something decidedly wrong with this way of doing things.

This makes for a very fearful situation in ISKCON.

MMdd

Comment posted by Mohana Mohini dd on December 2nd, 2012

24Unregistered

In #1 Kesava Krsna wrote:

“I think it is incorrect to say that only the “extreme” factions oppose lady guruship. That is a generalisation. I have written in defence of women devotees against ‘conservative’ views, but I need to be convinced that there is a compelling case for lady guruship. I do not consider myself to be a ‘conservative’ the way it is depicted in this article.

Whenever Srila Prabhupada cited historical examples, we usually see only one unique and outstanding name mentioned - that of Sri Jahnava Mata. This is rare indeed.

The problem now is weighing Her example up in the modern era. Just as we can cite Her rarity, we can also cite the relative frequency of male gurus. The pressing issue here is why the urge to push for a position of guruship, whether pursued by males or females? Is there competitiveness in wanting to emulate what males already do?

Are there any records of Sri Jahnava Mata being granted guruship because she petitioned for it? That question alone would be an insult if applied to Her. Her greatness and all allied divine qualities earned Her that position, though She would not have sought it Herself. She was recognised as ‘self-effulgent.’ Hers is a “hard act to follow” so to speak. She was an exception, not the rule.

Thank you very much for your wise words. Indeed it is not an extremist position but a sane position held by many in ISKCON. If male gurus fell down in the past then it just shows that there is a need to be more selective as to which man fill that post. Actually I think that it was because they took sannyasa in an era in ISKCON when sannyasa candidates weren't vetted like they are today. Very few if any sannyasis who were carefully vetted have fallen down. So as the old generation of sannyasis dies off you we will have much fewer fall downs and then there will be nothing to point fingers at.

Women can also make major blunders just like the 1st woman head of the 25 million strong German Lutheran Church, Bishop Margot Kaessmann, was arrested after she ran a red light while intoxicated and 3X over the legal limit. You can read about it here <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8530736.stm>

Comment posted by Mohana Mohini dd on December 2nd, 2012

25Visakha Priya dasi

Dear Madana Mohini, regarding Jahnava Mata, Srila Prabhupada cited her as an example NOT because she is the internal energy of Nityananda Prabhu but because she was in a woman's body and a qualified preacher. This is quite clear from Srila Prabhupada's conversation with the professors in Toronto.

Prof. O'Connell: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?

Prabhupāda: Yes. Jāhnava devī was—Nityānanda's wife. She became. IF SHE IS ABLE TO GO TO THE HIGHEST PERFECTION OF LIFE, WHY IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO BECOME GURU? But, not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. BUT MAN OR WOMAN, unless one has attained the perfection.... Yei kãñëa-tattva-vettã sei guru haya [Cc. Madhya 8.128]. The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kãñëa. Then he OR SHE can become guru.

Is this not clear? How can we be so quick to dismiss the words of our acarya just because they don't appear to tally with the only quote found in the Bhagavatam to the effect that Suniti could not become her son's guru? (For that matter, even Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur could not become the diksa-guru of his son.) Why is it that we keep ignoring the words of our founder-acarya who is especially empowered to explain the scriptures according to time, place, and circumstances (Kali-yuga)?

I very much appreciate Govinda dasi's posting on the matter. I also have no desire to become guru or to fight for "women's rights." But as a longtime full-time member of ISKCON, I am concerned that we preserve Srila Prabhupada's unique legacy—a legacy of transcendence. How many times did Srila Prabhupada said that we are not the body? Countless times! This is the most basic and important teaching. Why not work on that aspect of our own lives before passing judgments on the presumed identity of others? A guru is not supposed to be on the bodily platform. Krsna consciousness is a matter of CONSCIOUSNESS. As long as one identifies with the body, how can one be guru?

I am not anxious to win the argument or to assert anyone's alleged "rights." And I will truly be grateful if you would kindly explain to me why you can't accept Srila Prabhupada's words as they are.

Thank you. Hare Krsna.

Your servant,

Visakha Priya dasi