

GOVINDA DEVI DASI

Women Gurus In Kali Yuga?

Govinda Dasi

First let me say I am writing my opinions on this issue only because of repeated emails and postings. Frankly, I had hoped to stay out of it, but since some postings have even taken the liberty of expressing my opinions at a time when there were none, I have decided I must say something.

My first response to this issue was, with mild disbelief, “Why would any woman even want to become a guru?!” “Why would anyone want to take on someone else’s karmas?” So let me say early on, that I am in no way a contender for any such position, either in this life or the next. Frankly, I personally am much more interested in clearing my own remaining karmas and going back to Godhead than in taking on anyone else’s karmas.

Regarding the issue, male vs. female: Such kinds of strong identification and attachment to the temporary male/female bodily identities are a great detriment to spiritual life. Srila Prabhupada taught us that this human life is very short, and so tiny and frail. We can be male today, female tomorrow, female again, male again, or even feline, canine or whatever. He never fostered the intense (and ridiculous) identification with gender that somehow grew up in the later years of Iskcon.

Srila Prabhupada, being a great saintly personality, saw with “equal vision” as so stated in the Gita. Thus he gave equal love, concern, respect and often responsibilities to both his male and female disciples. Srila Prabhupada clearly saw the soul, and he based his dealings on that level. He wanted his female disciples protected, not exploited. And he wanted his male disciples to take up the yoke of responsibility he placed upon them.

All opinions aside, this is indeed Kali Yuga, and Kali’s world is replete with dozens of Gurus, Smurus, God-chasers, God-wannabes, and magicians posing as gurus. The fact that charlatans abound is certainly well publicized.

Even the high-end uptown swamis and gurus have run off with airline stewardesses and young female disciples. A short online search can produce numerous histories of such infamous gurus. It’s safe to say, “the water has been fouled by the few.”

Thus perhaps the main reason for the increasing clamor for female gurus is the widespread distrust of male power abuse, the patriarchal misuse of power that exists in the world today. After so much deception, power-mongering, and lechery, few spiritual aspirants feel safe in their choice of a male guru. This is across the board—not only in Iskcon, but in numerous other Vedantic societies, yoga margas, shamanic paths, etc.

Certainly, both within Iskcon and without, there are some very sincere and accomplished Godbrothers who are doing wonderful preaching work, and indeed sacrificing their lives to serve as guru to numerous

disciples. I greatly admire those of my dedicated Godbrothers who travel continuously all over Eastern Europe, India, Asia, and elsewhere, preaching and leading wonderful kirtans wherever they go. They are truly living the sanyas dharma as taught by Srila Prabhupada. They travel continuously, sacrificing their time and energy, and often in spite of advanced age and ill health. They have no private life, or “down time.” This is praiseworthy, and not an easy path to follow. They are fulfilling the role of guru to the best of their ability.

It is undeniable, however, that in Iskcon, as elsewhere, we have seen our share of power politics and also sexual misconduct amongst gurus, GBC’s, and other leaders. So has the Catholic church. So also has the Protestant revivalist culture. And so have the various Yoga/Hindu/Buddhist traditions as well.

Perhaps it is for this reason that many sincere spiritual aspirants find it much easier to entrust their soul to an older woman who has been practicing years of sincere sadhana—(whatever sadhana: Yogic, Buddhist, Hindu, etc)—than to a male guru who may eventually jump into bed with an airline stewardess—or worse—one of his trusting young disciples. In Iskcon as well, older women are more likely to be stable and sense-controlled, and established in their bhakti due to years of humble practice. It is far more likely to see an old gray-haired 60+ year-old male going after a 20-something female than an older woman doing this. So the reason for the clamor is clear.

In fact, in today’s Western culture, often the very term “guru” is enough to bring up automatic associations with “danger” or “scandal.” Out of curiosity, I recently read a book by Dr. Mariana Caplan called “The Guru Question: The Perils and Rewards of Choosing a Spiritual Teacher.” In it she states, “I have spent time with gurus who are living proof that “guru” can be a four-letter word. Nobody has asked me to drink Cyanide-laced Kool-Aid, but I have been offered plenty of other substances. And most of the other types of crimes of power and passion one hears about in relation to purported gurus have been perpetrated upon me and people I know. After seventeen years of experience on four continents and ten years of research in the field, I am both personally and professionally all too familiar with the shocking abuses of power that have been committed in the name of spirituality.” She also notes that, “Within spiritual circles in the United States, the argument can be summed up as follows: the gurus came West in the sixties; we believed in them; we gave them our money, lives, and souls, and they betrayed us with scandals involving money, sex, and power.”

Another important factor is this: Nowadays, the youth in America, and most of the Western world, have grown up (mostly) fatherless. Naturally, they are more inclined to trust and respect and hear from the senior women in their lives. After all, it was their mothers who remained steadfast, often struggling to support the children, while their fathers were either completely absent from home, or worse. Thus many young people simply do not trust male personalities due to their many bad experiences, either at home, in Gurukul, or in public schools or churches. This is a fact of modern life.

This is one reason that it is very likely that lady gurus will flourish in future. Female gurus are already prominent in various other spiritual paths, both in the East and the West. Some say this is because males in modern society have not lived up to the standards of manhood as set forth in the Vedas—and even common practical decency. It is a Kali Yuga fact.

So perhaps we should look at all this from the young bhaktas' point of view. If they grew up in Iskcon, it was the matajis who fed them, clothed them, and protected them, and the male devotees who beat them, verbally assaulted them, and even sexually abused them. In mainstream Western society, with its colossal divorce rate, it is the mothers who worked two jobs to feed the kids, send them to school, and counsel them, and who tried to protect them from taking wrong paths. More often than not, the fathers abandoned them, showed little signs of caring, paid little or no child support (unless forced to do so by the courts), and usually found a younger prettier wife as well. Realistically, how does this compare with the Vedic conception of "man's duty and woman's duty?"

So as a result of such upbringing, many young aspirants simply do not trust the male figure as a role model in Western society. He has lost his credibility.

In Dr. Caplan's book, the author explores the horrors of trusting various gurus, and outlines the principle of "conscious discipleship." Casually translated, this means, "educate yourself and understand the complexity of the student-teacher relationship, examine the teacher carefully, don't be gullible, exercise spiritual discernment, and be very very cautious when choosing a guru." Her own horrid experiences often echo ours within Iskcon. It shows there really is a problem, and we need to find a way to address it. We cannot be blind to the issues at hand.

We have to live in the times that we find ourselves placed, and do the best we can to spread Lord Chaitanya's Sankirtan movement. We have to find a way to do this without getting too hung up or stuck in some temporary male/female, black/white, or green/pink identity. That is the crux of the matter.

So the real issue is this: can this concept of female gurus be embraced by our spiritual lineage, and ordained by our line of Acharyas coming from Brahma? That is the important question.

The following quotes from Srila Prabhupada's letters and conversations seem to verify that it can indeed be supported by the Acharya.

"If a woman is perfect in Krsna consciousness ... Just like Jahnavi devi, Lord Nityananda's wife, she was acarya. She was acarya. She was controlling the whole Vaisnava community.... It is not that woman cannot be acarya." (Conversation 6/29/72)

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

Prabhupada: Yes. Jahnavi-devi was Nityananda's wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection.... Yei krsna-tattva-vetta sei guru haya. The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Krsna. Then he or she can become guru. Yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei guru haya. 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." (Conversation 6/18/76)

In one of Srila Prabhupada's letters to his disciple Hamsaduta in 1969, he states, "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."

These statements seem to verify that female guruhood can indeed be supported by both the Acharya and the Disciplic Succession.

However, I think the problem here may be the difference between our definition of guru, and Srila Prabhupada's definition of guru. Srila Prabhupada's statements seem to center on the spiritual wealth of Krishna Consciousness that he wanted to "continue through the generations" and increase the numbers of the generations."

Problems arise when our Iskcon definition of guru becomes more like "little kings" or "feudal lords" competing with one another for disciples, power, money, and fame. Srila Prabhupada's definition of guru is clearly a spiritual one, one that focuses on teaching and inspiring spiritual aspirants along the path to Godhead.

Heralding an era of female gurus does seem to threaten some of the male disciples. It seems there may be some hesitancy on the part of insecure males due to their own feelings of inner worth, or feelings of insecurity regarding the superiority of their "maleness." We hope it will be possible to get past this. The important thing is to live in the times that we find ourselves, and try to progress and promote Krishna consciousness however we can. That was always Srila Prabhupada's perspective. He was always focused on getting the message of Lord Chaitanya out in the world, not on which person did it.

Here is one example of the times that we live in. One young devotee lady, second generation, Tulsi Gabbard, from Hawaii, was just recently elected to the US Congress in Washington D. C. President Obama endorsed and backed her campaign prior to the election. At her January inauguration, Tulsi will be sworn in on Srila Prabhupada's Bhagavad Gita As It Is, Original Edition, as she publicly declares that she is a Hindu and a vegetarian. This is the kind of preaching work that will open up fields of interest all over the world—what to speak of in America. And from a spiritual perspective, just having people chanting the name "Tulsi" grants benefit. During the campaign, our highways were papered with signs and billboards bearing the words, VOTE TULSI.COM. This, I assure you, would delight Srila Prabhupada!

Folks, I think its time we move into the 21st century. As Srila Prabhupada once told an agitated brahmachary, if it bothers you to be around ladies, you should go to the forest!

So my overall opinion is this: female gurus are inevitable. It will happen sooner or later. It is already happening in other spiritual lines; it is only a matter of time before it happens in our line. Perhaps it is just another consideration of Kali Yuga, and just doesn't line up with our Vedic ideals, but what does? Srila Prabhupada was far more concerned with spreading Krishna Consciousness than sticking to ancient traditions.

He saw the need of the times, and he stepped forward into the 21st century. He initiated his female disciples with Gayatri mantra, encouraged them to perform arotiks and Deity worship, and to manage temples when needed. He saw that girls are educated in the same ways as boys in the Western countries, and instead of trying to suppress that, he encouraged his female disciples to do whatever they excelled in—whether it was art, music, Deity worship, public relations, management, or whatever. It was much later, due to the anti-woman sentiment of a few agitated leaders, that Iskcon became so lopsided and averse to the spiritual welfare of the women and children.

In 1968, Srila Prabhupada did in fact list two of his female disciples to serve on the original GBC (Yamuna devi, and myself, Govinda dasi) but the opposition by some of his senior men prevented this. (Too bad—it could have saved millions in lawsuits and bad PR from the child abuse cases.) Now, years later, we see that there is at least one senior woman disciple on the GBC, as Srila Prabhupada originally intended.

However, in this guruhood issue, I see the real danger is the dark horse called ambition. Srila Prabhupada repeatedly stressed that there is no place in spiritual life for personal ambition. So anyone, male or female, who decides to step in line for guruhood, should deeply question his or her inner motives. Is he or she inspired by a genuine desire to serve Srila Prabhupada, and to serve others, or is there some personal ambition lurking beneath the layers? Is he or she inspired by the desire for: Fame? Money? Adoration? Security? He or she must answer confidently, that he/she is not deceiving his/herself, but can actually uplift lost souls and place them at the lotus feet of the Lord. He or she must also be able take on the disciples' past karmas, and purify them without losing his or her own purity. This is the real test. Not some “rubberstamp guru approval.” That hasn't worked in the past, and it won't work in the future.

I myself am very “old-school.” I still believe in the old-fashioned philosophy that Srila Prabhupada taught us, and that his Guru Maharaj taught him: That is: “Don't anyone try to become guru prematurely, just go on with your service. Whoever is meant to become guru will come out automatically in time.” And that already is happening; many have come, and many have gone.

There are teachers, there are guides, and there are various types of gurus. There is a vast difference between such teachers, guides, and gurus—and the Acharya, like Srila Prabhupada. There is no harm in teaching and guiding others; but there can be great harm done if one accepts disciples prematurely, both to the “fallen guru” and to the disciples. This is the great danger.

If there is a need to fulfill, that is, people want diksha so they feel they “belong” to the “club” or the institution, we must be very clear on what type of guru is giving that kind of diksha. And by all means, we should not place so much importance on any Iskcon guru who seems to eclipse the importance of Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada is the Master Guru of us all. We are like small moons orbiting around the sun of Srila Prabhupada; he is giving us the spiritual light and we are reflecting that light into the world. We must always remember from where our light is coming, and pray to Krishna to always remain humble in his presence.

All this, and more, is why, my initial reaction remains, “Who, in their right mind, would want to take up the role of diksha guru?”

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Comments • [comment feed]

1Visakha Priya dasi

Dear Govinda dasi Prabhu,

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

Thank you for this thoughtful piece of writing, which thoroughly befits someone who had extensive and profound association with His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada. As we have recently heard in an article about the subject matter at hand, "... Simply by studying the Vedas, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in the heart of an unadulterated, self-realized person. Consequently, as the sastras confirm, one should accept whatever progressive path the mahajanas advocate." Cc Madhya 17.186).

I find your views to be balanced, respectful, realistic, and in full accordance with Srila Prabhupada's teachings. All glories to Srila Prabhupada, the universal teacher, and all glories to you, his faithful and intelligent disciple.

Your lowly servant,

Visakha Priya dasi

Comment posted by Visakha Priya dasi on December 2nd, 2012

2Puskaraksa das

Dear Govinda dasi Mataji

Pranams. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. All glories to Sri Guru & Sri Gauranga.

Thank you very much for this well-written and instructive article.

If I may, I would like to reinforce, without repeating the same quotes literally - as they are stated on Posts 19 & 20 in the thread of comments on Ajamila Prabhu's article about Female Diksa Gurus - the two main points which Srila Prabhupada insisted upon, namely Authorization and Qualification.

So, the main question is: Who will decide that one is qualified to become guru and accept disciples?

The answer is obviously, as stated by Srila Prabhupada, one's bona fide spiritual master, who has been himself authorized by his own spiritual master, and so on. This is the Parampara process, the process of bona fide disciplic succession.

And who will train one to become Guru, so that he or she, may become qualified, if not one's bona fide spiritual master?

Here is another enlightening confirmation by Srila Prabhupada on these two very important points.

Srila Prabhupada Room Conversation, Bombay, April 22, 1977:

Prabhupada: What is the use of producing some rascal guru?

Tamala Krishna: Well, I have studied myself and all of your disciples, and it's clear fact that we are all conditioned souls, so we cannot be guru. Maybe one day it may be possible...

Prabhupada: Hm.

Tamala Krishna: ...but not now.

Prabhupada: Yes. I shall produce some gurus. I shall say who is guru, 'Now you become acharya. You become authorized.' I am waiting for that. You become, all, acharya. I retire completely. But the training must be complete.

Tamala Krishna: The process of purification must be there.

Prabhupada: Oh, yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahaprabhu wants that. Amara ajnaya guru hana. "You become guru." (laughs) But be qualified. Little thing, strictly follower.

Tamala Krishna: Not rubber stamp.

Prabhupada: Then you'll not be effective. You can cheat, but it will not be effective. Just see our Gaudiya Matha. Everyone wanted to become guru, and a small temple and "guru." What kind of guru?"

Some may argue and say: But who will train us to become guru, now that Srila Prabhupada has physically departed?

Then, how could one conceive of becoming guru and represent the Parampara, if in the first place, he or she is not in contact with his or her own spiritual master, provided he is a nitya-siddha?

How could one then ever be a sat guru, a Tattva darshi?

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on December 2nd, 2012

3Puskaraksa das

In your article, you also stressed quite extensively the fact that it was more or less a fatality that women became guru in our day and age in Kali-yuga, because of the high rate of divorce, of men falling pray to women, of children being raised by single-parent families - i.e. by a woman, etc...

So, even if a grey-haired woman (unless she is of the "cougar" type or very rich) is less likely to run away with a young man, since physical beauty is one of the main attributes which attracts the male gender, this still seem to lack substance in itself to give credit to the fact that one may be capable of liberating one's disciples.

Otherwise, unless one is, Sastra says: "Gurur na sa syat", "One should not become Guru!"

Therefore, rather than defining oneself as an alternative default - per se - a woman becoming guru should meet the criteria to become guru, just like any other person or soul, whether seated in a man or woman's body, ought to:

kripasindhu susampurnah sarva satvopakarakah

nisprah sarvatah siddhah sarva vidya visaradah

sarva samsaya sanccheta 'nalaso gurur ahrtah

(Haribhakti Vilasa - 1/45/46)

Such person is called Guru who is an ocean of mercy, who feels pain on seeing the unhappiness of others, who is always satisfied and who works for the welfare of others, who does not desire sense gratification, who is perfect in all respects, who is expert in all scriptural knowledge, who removes the doubts of his followers and who is not lazy. (always busy in serving the Lord).

and measure up to the title as well as the position and subsequent qualities of the acarya:

acaryam mam vyaniyan

navamanyeta karhicit

na martya-buddhasuyeta

sarva-deva-mayo guruh

(S.B. - 11.17.27)

Lord Sri Krishna told Uddhava:

One should know the acarya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on December 2nd, 2012

4Puskaraksa das

It is stated in Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.5.2:

mahat-sevām dvāram āhur vimuktes

tamo-dvāraṁ yoṣitām saṅgi-saṅgam

mahāntas te sama-cittāḥ praśāntā

vimanyavaḥ suhrdaḥ sādhaso ye

One can attain the path of liberation from material bondage only by rendering service to highly advanced spiritual personalities. These personalities are impersonalists and devotees. Whether one wants to merge into the Lord's existence or wants to associate with the Personality of Godhead, one should render service to the mahātmās. For those who are not interested in such activities, who associate with people fond of women and sex, the path to hell is wide open. The mahātmās are equipoised. They do not see any difference between one living entity and another. They are very peaceful and are fully engaged in devotional service. They are devoid of anger, and they work for the benefit of everyone. They do not behave in any abominable way. Such people are known as mahātmās.

So, hopefully, we will gradually be able to see an increasing number of mahatmas coming up, as Krishna consciousness progresses and as more elevated souls incarnate both on the planet earth and in Vaishnava families.

Hence, we won't have to debate about bad experiences with male gurus or male dentists and have to choose another alternative, because of such bad experiences.

Rather, we will fortunately be able to qualify ourselves to become eligible to being sheltered by a sat guru:

brahmanda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva

guru-krsna prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija

tate krishna bhaje kare gurur sevan

mayajala chute pay sri-krishna-charan

C.c. Madhya - 19/151 & 22/25

Thus wandering through the entire universe, some fortunate soul gets the seed of bhakti-lata by the grace of the Spiritual master and Sri Krishna. Then one worships Krishna under the guidance of Guru and frees oneself from the illusory energy.

However, we should not forget that this is Kali yuga; so if there are cheaters, it is also because there are people who deserve to be cheated!

Hence, not only should the guru be qualified, but the disciple too:

“The servant of the guru should be free from pride, not lazy or egoistic with the sense of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ in relation with wife and children, very devoted to Guru, not negligent, devoted to inquiry about the Supreme Truth, free from enviousness, not wasting time in loose conversations; all these qualities are befitting a disciple” S.B. 11.10.6

Thanks again Mataji. AGTSP

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on December 2nd, 2012

5Visakha Priya dasi

Dear Puskaraksa Prabhu, I may of course be wrong, but it seems to me that you are misunderstanding Govinda dasi’s point regarding young people preferring “to entrust their soul” to elderly women. She is not speaking about qualification, which is a foregone conclusion, but about the psychology of those spiritual aspirants.

Comment posted by Visakha Priya dasi on December 3rd, 2012

6Praghosa

As moderator of this site I wish to keep an open mind on this discussion and in particular whatever conclusion is reached, if any. Naturally I have my own thoughts but I want to remain open to changing them as this discussion develops.

One quote that is often used to argue against women ever giving diksa is:

According to sastraic injunctions, there is no difference between siksa-guru and diksa-guru, and generally the siksa-guru later on becomes the diksa-guru. Suniti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Maharaja’s diksa-guru.” (Bhag. 4.12.32 purport)

Even with the above reference, the door is left open as far as the words ‘specifically his mother’

In addition we have the following reference:

asvamedham gavalambham

sannyasam pala-paitrkam

devarena sutotpattim

kalau panca vivarjayet

“In this age of Kali, five acts are forbidden: the offering of a horse in sacrifice, the offering of a cow in sacrifice, the acceptance of the order of sannyasa, the offering of oblations of flesh to the forefathers, and a man’s begetting children in his brother’s wife.” (Cc. Adi 17.164)

Now we know that both SBSST, Srila Prabhupada and of course the GBC do not follow this sastric injunction. It is understood that over and above sastra we follow the order of the acarya first and foremost. Our acarya, Srila Prabhupada, waived this particular injunction in deference to the preaching mission.

One question that needs to be answered is - should we also waive the rigid objection to women gurus in deference to the preaching mission? Our acarya Srila Prabhupada seems to indicate such a course of action with many references, in particular this one:

“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

Capitals mine for emphasis

Ys Praghosa dasa

Comment posted by Praghosa on December 3rd, 2012

7Unregistered

Regarding taking sannyasa in Kaliyuga the following quote from Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Vaibhava vol. 1 pp.166-167 gives some insight hitherto not much known in ISKCON circles.

Vaisnava sannyasa being unheard of in Bengal, Srila

Sarasvati Thakura and his disciples had to repeatedly uphold

its validity to skeptical inquirers, many of whom cited a

Brahma-vaivarta Purana verse that Caitanya Mahaprabhu

Himself had quoted, interdicting sannyasa in Kali-yuga:

asvamedham gavalambham sannyasam pala-paitrkam

devarena sutotpattim kalau païca vivarjayet

Five acts forbidden in Kali-yuga are: horse sacrifice, cow sacrifice, accepting sannyasa, offering oblations of flesh to forefathers, and begetting children in the wife of one's brother.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati would reply that

Mahaprabhu had cited this reference to rebut a sinful anti-Vedic Muslim magistrate who wanted to justify beef-eating on the basis of Vedic scripture, and within that debate the topic of sannyasa was mentioned only circumstantially. In other words, Mahaprabhu never stressed prohibition of sannyasa, but instead demonstrated the contrary shortly thereafter by Himself embracing sannyasa. Nor in so doing did He violate sastra, because the injunction forbidding sannyasa in Kali-yuga is from a rajasika Purana meant for karmis and applies to karma-sannyasa, to be undertaken exclusively by pure Vedic brahmanas, who no longer exist in Kali-yuga and thus whose mode of renunciation should not be imitated by unqualified men. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati further explained that this scriptural directive was never meant to restrain suitable persons from dedicating their whole self to the intrinsic function of the soul, namely service to the Supreme Lord, Krsna. Moreover, that smarta Raghunandana had prescribed a full-day fast as atonement for failing to offer respect upon first seeing a sannyasi

confirmed that even the most fastidious adherents to sastrya requirements had recognized the concept of sannyasa in Kali-yuga. Ideological enemies further accused Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati of impropriety for taking sannyasa “by himself,” but the precedent had been set by the great Vaisnava acarya Sri Ramanuja.

continued

Comment posted by Balakrsna das on December 3rd, 2012

8Unregistered

Part 2

Although in recent generations sannyasa in the Gaudiya sampradaya had been practically unheard of, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati pointed out that not only was Lord Caitanya a sannyasi, but so were His guru and parama-guru, that nine sannyasi associates of Mahaprabhu are listed in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta (1.9.13–15) as roots of the Caitanya tree, and that Srīmat Prabodhananda Sarasvati, a prominent devotee of Lord Caitanya, was a tridanda-sannyasi.

Furthermore, the seminal acaryas of the four recognized Vaisnava paramparas—Sri Visnusvami, Sri Nimbarka, Sri Ramanuja, and Sri Madhva—and numerous others in their discipular lines had taken sannyasa in Kali-yuga.

Srila Sarasvati Thakura accepted and later bestowed sannyasa according to the ceremony described in Samskaradipika for inducting renunciants, which had become

identified with the rite known as giving bhek to babajis. He and his sannyasis dressed in the ankle-length red cloth of sannyasa, similar to that of Ramakrishna Mission sannyasis, whose robes had become familiar and respected in Bengal. Instead of tridandas of uncovered tied sticks like those of the Sri sampradaya, Gaudiya Matha sannyasis carried tridandas wrapped in strips of red cloth, resembling the sannyasa rods of Mayavadis in North India. To the three sticks that represented dedication of body, mind, and speech in service to the Lord, Srila Sarasvati Thakura added another stick to symbolize the jiva, and at the top of the danda placed a small curved stick, symbolizing an ax for cutting nondevotional theories.^{clxiii} Gaudiya Matha sannyasa differed from that within the established lines of Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva in that it was not awarded solely to men of brahmana caste, and because horoscopes of prospective candidates were not consulted for ascertaining their fitness for lifelong renunciation.

There is more discussion on the topic but I just quoted the beginning of the discussion interested readers can consult the original text.

Comment posted by Balakrsna das on December 3rd, 2012

9Kesava Krsna dasa

Part One:

I was also thinking that for preaching purposes, and particularly for attracting 'progressive' females, or people in general, to our cause, that by having lady gurus it would help. It probably will. But when I see that Srila Prabhupada usually cited one exceptional example in Sri Jahnava Mata, then we have to weigh

up preaching over quality. To date we generally preach with urgency, allowing for the experience of quality to develop.

By this reasoning, if ladies become gurus, we would expect quality to develop. When we put this into perspective of the last reference Praghosa Prabhu provided, we can see that Srila Prabhupada was optimistic that all his sons and daughters initiate disciples.

That reference was written in early 1969. During those times, as Govinda Mataji can attest, Iskcon was still in the 'close family' mode. Indeed, Govinda Mataji was Srila Prabhupada's secretary for a while. Three disciple couples were to travel to London to set Iskcon history. Can we see why Srila Prabhupada was optimistic? (Of course he always was) "By 1975..." he wanted Bhaktivedanta namesakes. Did things happen this way? No.

This optimism can also be reactive, as Srila Prabhupada was known to react to various situations, apparently 'good' or 'bad.' Sometimes he would say, "Do not mix with my Godbrothers..." Other times he would say, "No more sannyasa initiation..." Both of these reactive statements are still disputed today.

The question can be raised, "Were these statements absolute?" It is a valid question because it pertains to 'relative' social issues. Do we take everything that Srila Prabhupada said, one way or another, favouring one side or another, on social relative matters as absolute? We are not talking specifics here, as might apply to individuals or certain temples and so on - but in general.

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa.

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on December 3rd, 2012

10Kesava Krsna dasa

Part Two:

By the time 1975 arrived, Srila Prabhupada had witnessed the 'institutionalisation' of Iskcon, as the focus on renunciation intensified, sometimes at the cost of Iskcon unity. The Iskcon of 1975 was quite different from the Iskcon of 1969.

How do we reconcile the 1975 desire with the present day? Requirements for sannyasa and guruship has improved. We are still not 100% immune to fall-downs yet. Yet to increase our preaching, would it help to have lady gurus? Would we be sending a message out to the world that, "Yes, we are modern and progressive... we are still retaining tradition with adaptation to changing times..."

Is it a form of narrow rigidity to not consider the matter of lady gurus as relevant? Is it severely inflexible to urge caution when weighing up today's preaching ethics with lady gurus at the forefront, against the uniqueness of the position of Sri Jahnava Mata who, by the way, was not just a regular guru, but an acarya?

Would we be lowering the bar if we allowed lady diksa gurus to flourish? Would this encourage a type of thinking that equates our regular lady gurus with Sri Jahnava Mata, especially when petitioning is rife for this?

What to speak of 1975 being different, the 80's and 90's saw radical changes, and yet again up to the present. Do all these fluctuations reveal that we are trying too hard to establish permanent stability whilst being relevant to a largely indifferent preaching field? Can we slacken long held traditions to enable this?

If we do not have lady gurus, would that make us irrelevant in society? Isn't there a golden opportunity for us to showcase to the world how our lady devotees can be versatile and progressive and yet be exemplary Mothers as well?

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa.

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on December 3rd, 2012

11Kesava Krsna dasa

Part Three:

Otherwise I appreciated Mother Govinda's balanced article. I can empathise with the possibility of older ladies being trusted due to the general weakness of males unable to live up to expected levels of trust and protection. Such balance can also be found in SB.

For instance, in the Bhumi Gita of the 3rd chapter of canto 12, Mother Earth describes the weaknesses of the male species, whereas elsewhere, Kasyapa Muni is bemoaning the wiles of women in reaction to his wife Diti, who served very expertly in order to get a son capable of killing Lord Indra.

I am sure that our misplaced focus on renunciation within Iskcon, and the less than perfect standards set by males is a contributing factor in this whole debate. If it is, then we are attributing socio-gender antiphons to the matter at hand, which has nothing to do with merit. That is my concern.

Put simply, the push for lady gurus is not pursued totally on merit, but as a reaction to blighted male handling of Iskcon affairs – as certain women see it. Perhaps they have a point. But if ladies had a 50% share in running Iskcon affairs – in keeping with certain democracies – would that improve things? How far are we prepared to accede to 'women's rights' on the plea of preaching?

What if all of our lady devotees felt truly protected and cared for within Iskcon, would we be having these discussions today? Is it because they feel let down that they want compensation in the form of lady gurus, who will better understand the concerns of womanhood, and thus take better care of them than the men do? If this is the case, then the male contingent has to take some blame.

There are no absolutes on this social topic. I can only lend some opinions. It is for our devotee jury and ultimately, the GBC to decide. But I still have to be convinced...

Ys Kesava Krsna Dasa.

Comment posted by Kesava Krsna dasa on December 3rd, 2012

12Puskaraksa das

Yes, Mother Visaka Priya, I understood the sociological analysis of a Kali-yuga situation, described at length in the article, as well as the fact that children raised mostly by women within single-parent families - to which we could also add "and educated mostly by female teachers" - may not be familiar with the protective fatherly and manly figure, and then may tend to still keep looking for shelter, as disbalanced adults, behind their mother's skirts...

But, we are discussing Guru Tattva, aren't we?

We are not basing our philosophy on the law of offer and demand, are we?

So, it is not because there may be some demand for women to pose or act as guru, that we should subsequently provide the corresponding offer, shouldn't we?

Guru Tattva is essentially based on these two points, as explained by Srila Prabhupada, namely, "Qualification" and "Authorization".

Hence, whether male or female, one should first become "qualified" to represent the Supreme Personality of Godhead and our Parampara and act as a bona fide current acarya. This qualification is acquired via a specific training provided to selected disciples, by the bona fide spiritual master.

Then, when the training is complete, as and when judged and decided to be so, by one's bona fide spiritual master, the predecessor guru will order his disciple to take up the position of guru.

That means that one has to be authorized to represent the Parampara and all our previous acaryas, all the way to Krishna Himself. One ought not proclaim oneself guru or be elected by one's Godbrothers and/or Godsisters... All the more, one should not take up the position of guru because of some new devotees who may aspire to become one's disciples. As per Guru and Sastras, this is not a good enough reason to become guru!

So, our senior ladies should know better and draw lessons from the past, since they are said to be less influenced by ego than men. Nevertheless, they should not fall into the trap of claiming equal rights, on the basis of identifying themselves as a gender, with their body.

We ought not discriminate in between men and women on the spiritual platform. But we are looking for genuine spiritual advancement, the proof being in one's being willing to surrender to the process set up by our acaryas, i.e.: complete training, then qualification, then authorization.

This is the guarantee that one may not add to the already far too long list of the cheaters and the cheated!

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on December 3rd, 2012

13kavicandra swami

I appreciate Govinda dasi's opinions here very much and feel that Srila Prabhupada is speaking thru her, in this case. I wrote a comment some time back but do not see it her. Visakha priya devi said everything i said much more eloquently.

Comment posted by kavicandra swami on December 4th, 2012

14Unregistered

Praghosa Prabhu

Great comment regarding sannyasa!

Balaksna Prabhu

If you look at the history of Vaishnavism, in Bengal specifically, renunciates normally took to the babaji path.

The sole purpose of Mahaprabhu's sannyasa was in order to get respect because sannyasis were respected and seen as authorities on Vedic teachings. The idea in the head of an average person that sannyasis are actually in a superior position of knowledge and purity and spiritual advancement is what the taking of sannyasa is for in gaudiya society. It is to convince non-gaudiya vaisnavas to come and hear from "the swami". It is the idea that people have about a swami, not that gaudiya vaisnavas should actually believe that swamis actually are in a superior position just because they are swamis. Spiritual advancement, purity, and knowledge are not dependent on total renunciation of family, society, nor celibacy. The idea that renunciates are more advanced comes from the mystic and tantric yoga and Buddhist traditions which were and are interrelated to the Advaita traditions. In those traditions it is taught that spiritual advancement is made through material processes – through tapasya, through celibacy, through vairagya, etc. Their idea is that through some material process they will gain mystic siddhis and moksa or nirvana. This is because they do not believe in a personal God who is in control of their minds and lives and who has the ability to give enlightenment and spiritual advancement. The bhakti traditions are supposed to be about the reception of divine grace. Realization of our relationship with the personality of Godhead is what bhakti is all about. The Gita and the Bhagavatam talk about reception of divine knowledge and devotion to the cultivation of our relationship with that knowledge and it's source as the means and the ends to spiritual advancement, purity, and enlightened jnana. It's a transcendental process of the reception of divine grace, not a material process dependent on tapasya, brahmacarya, or vairagya.

Comment posted by bbd on December 4th, 2012

15pustakrishna

There is an impression by some that the Vaishnava-acharya, the qualified Guru, is trying to capture something for themselves. That is not at all the case. The spiritual teacher is best recognized as a

“transparent via medium”. We should be getting feeling for and realization of Krishna-bhakti through their teaching. The acharya must not be some type of ‘arterial plaque’ that blocks or obstructs the flow toward Krishna. Krishna is the Supreme Enjoyer. The spiritual master is satisfied when the disciple is developing dependency upon and surrender to the Supreme Lord.

It is vital to avoid misconstruing what is the post of Guru. He is an inspiration and guide to the lotus feet of Krishna. In the Koran, it is stressed that God, Allah, does not need any partner in spirituality. That He is sufficient witness and sanctioner. In the Bhagavad Gita, however, we see that Krishna advises to approach His devotee to learn about the truth (4.34). Thus, we can see that the advice of Krishna is to seek to learn more and more about Him and devotional service from a qualified vaishnava. This flavor of spirituality brings the aspiring vaishnava to appreciate the reality of loving relationship with God, raso vai sah. Not only is the destination important, but even more so the feeling of love and surrender to God. Ultimately, one minimizes their salvation for the sake of bhakti, love of God. It is unique in all of the scriptures of the world. Beyond salvationism is the very nature, the sanatan dharma, of the jiva soul, that one is the eternal loving servant of the Supreme Lord.

These goals of life may be taught by any qualified vaishnava, in man or woman’s body. The line of Krishna consciousness is siksha (instruction). Diksha is a formality, that ideally emphasizes the goal of offenseless chanting of the Holy Names. Those current vaishnavas who look to Srila Prabhupad’s books for guidance must know this. Not having physically met Srila Prabhupad, he is nonetheless the inspiration for their spiritual life. All subsequent “teachers” in ISKCON have drawn from the well of Srila Prabhupad’s instruction. And, Srila Prabhupad would be the first to say that he is not the goal, but rather Sri Krishna. Time and again, when asked: “what do you want of us?” Srila Prabhupad’s answer was “that you love Krishna.” Pusta Krishna das

Comment posted by pustakrishna on December 5th, 2012

16Akruranatha

Interesting comments by Caitanya Candrodaya (bbd...is that your name?)

” It is the idea that people have about a swami, not that gaudiya vaisnavas should actually believe that swamis actually are in a superior position just because they are swamis. ”

I have been studying the 18th Chapter of Bhagavad-Gita lately. It is clear that real renunciation means total surrender and exclusive shelter in Krishna, and that such surrender may be manifested by a householder, a sudra, the wife of a sudra, or whatever, performing his or her duties according to the nature associated with one’s particular type of body. (When one is totally surrendered, one is no longer under the control of material nature according to three gunas, but one acts according to internal potency).

Even sannyasis cannot totally give up activity. If they stop breathing for even a few minutes they will pass out. (I suppose some accomplished yogis can stop breath, peristalsis, heart, etc., but just for a limited time).

But still, sannyasis are spiritual masters of society because they demonstrate by their external conduct the internal stage of renunciation and detachment from sense gratification. Before we are in the brahma-bhuta stage, it is hard for us to follow the regulations followed by sannyasis. That's okay. We should follow our own modes of work according to our natures and offer the fruits to Krishna. Householders especially should be engaged in serving the Deities and spending money on maintaining temples and missionary work. But gradually as we get older we should prepare ourselves to take up the lifestyle of renunciation which proclaims externally the internal stage of renunciation that we have cultivated through a lifetime of chanting Hare Krishna.

The idea that babajis are above varnasrama and all its rules and regulations became an excuse for fake sadhus who were still attached to sense gratification and even sinful behavior like intoxication and illicit sex. Actual paramahansa babajis like Haridas Thakur and the six goswamis are indeed above all rules and regulations, but the tendency has been for sahajiyas to take it cheaply and to adopt the dress of babajis without the one-pointed intelligence and complete absorption in Krishna consciousness.

So, the renounced order is an important reminder that actual internal renunciation is our goal. Such internal renunciation can be expressed externally, and should be, by exemplary spiritual leaders.

Comment posted by Akruanatha on December 5th, 2012

17Unregistered

Akruanatha

Mahaprabhu, Sri Rupa, Sri Sanatana, Sri Jiva, etc spoke and wrote about developing Krishna consciousness, suddha bhakti, not about changing the world into some kind of Vedic society. In ISKCON we get this idea taught that Krishna consciousness comes inherently with so many cultural aspects and taboos. That is not a fact. Indian culture or Vedic culture or varnashrama-dharma was rejected by Mahaprabhu as what he was bringing.

In Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya 8 Mahaprabhu asks Ramananda Raya

“Recite a verse from the revealed scriptures concerning the ultimate goal of life.”

Ramananda replies that by acting in ones prescribed dharma then that is vishnu-bhakti, he then quotes a sloka from the Vishnu Purana which states that only by following varnashrama-dharma is Vishnu pleased. This is what follows:

The Lord replied, “This is external. You had better tell Me of some other means.” Ramananda replied, “To offer the results of one’s activities to Krishna is the essence of all perfection.”

Ramananda Raya continued, “My dear son of Kunti, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give in charity, and whatever austerities you perform, all the results of such activities should be offered to Me, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

“This is also external,” Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said. “Please proceed and speak further on this matter.” Ramananda Raya replied, “To give up one’s occupational duties in the varnasrama system is the essence of perfection.”

Ramananda Raya continued, “Occupational duties are described in the religious scriptures. If one analyzes them, he can fully understand their qualities and faults and then give them up completely to render service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such a person is considered a first-class man.’

“As stated in scripture [Bg. 18.66], ‘After giving up all kinds of religious and occupational duties, if you come to Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and take shelter, I will give you protection from all of life’s sinful reactions. Do not worry.’”

After hearing Ramananda Raya speak in this way, Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu again rejected his statement and said, “Go ahead and say something more.” Ramananda Raya then replied, “Devotional service mixed with empiric knowledge is the essence of perfection.”

Comment posted by bbd on December 5th, 2012

18Unregistered

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Ramananda Raya continued, “According to the Bhagavad-gita, ‘One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.’”

Mahaprabhu rejected everything Ramananda Raya said as being “external” until Ramananda said:

“After hearing this, the Lord, as usual, rejected it, considering it to be external devotional service. He again asked Ramananda Raya to speak further, and Ramananda Raya replied, “Pure devotional service without any touch of speculative knowledge is the essence of perfection.””

Basically Ramananda is saying that the path of the jnani should be given up and that people who take up bhakti and surrender to or honor hearing about the Lord, that they conquer the unconquerable Lord. This was the first thing from Ramananda which Mahaprabhu didn’t reject as external or superfluous.

Mahaprabhu rejected everything until Ramananda spoke about pure bhakti. Mahaprabhu rejected varnashrama, karma yoga, renunciation of ones occupational dharma, and the path of the impersonal jnani mixed with bhakti. We are being taught that these things are external to what Mahaprabhu has come to teach.

Comment posted by bbd on December 5th, 2012

19Akruranatha

Yes but...

Lord Caitanya rejected the proposal that the path of jnana and karma and mystic yoga were life's ultimate goal, or the means for attaining it. He was not rejecting Vedic knowledge as being scientifically untruthful. He was just saying that prema is the goal of life and surpasses mundane dharma.

I agree that our mission, ISKCON's mission, is primarily to promote harinama sankirtan and appreciation for hearing and chanting about Srila Prabhupada's books, and secondarily perhaps to establish temples where people can be trained in Deity worship and all aspects of bhakti yoga, and finally perhaps thirdly to demonstrate a more simple, natural and pious way of life for people in accordance with the laws of nature.

I guess some of the principles of basic morality are also necessary principles of bhakti yoga. For example, a bhakti yogi must avoid meat eating, illicit sex, intoxication and gambling. The fact that these activities are impious, papa, and will produce sinful reactions may not matter as much to a devotee as the fact that these actions will displease Krishna and the spiritual master and will jeopardize one's standing in devotional service.

But similarly other principles of ethics or morality can jeopardize our standing in bhakti. "Niyamagraha" is forbidden in two senses. One should not be attached to rules without knowing the purpose behind them, but one also should not break the regulative principles by which one lives a wholesome, pious devotional life. Don't steal, don't cheat, don't lie, don't be cruel. If you serve an employer you should not be disloyal. If you raise livestock you should not sell to slaughterers. The similar corollaries are "tat tat karma pravartanat" and "sato vratah": one must perform one's regulated duties (primarily spiritual duties such as japa, deity worship, bathing, tilak, etc.) and follow the path of the acaryas, including (I have heard Srila Prabhupada translated it this way) earning one's livelihood honestly.

I agree it is important to understand the superexcellence of pure bhakti over mere pious behavior, but the relationship between the two needs to be thoroughly explored. We should thoroughly understand the whole Bhagavad-Gita as well as Bhagavatam and Caitanya Caritamrta.

We are not these bodies, but we should act properly (with body, mind and words) in serving Krishna. We should know right from wrong action. We should know how to act as spirit souls, and to engage others.

Comment posted by Akruranatha on December 6th, 2012

20Unregistered

Dear Basu Gosh Prabhu,

Srila Prabhupada said, "Do not throw the baby out with the bath water" and also "A wise man takes a jewel from a filthy place." That being said we joyfully listen to the intimate associates of Srila Prabhupada, even if they have at one time or another fallen. We also give audience to ISKCON Gurus, many who have at one time or another fallen. We listen and learn in the three ways Srila Prabhupada mentions, by hearing, watching others experience, or unfortunately from our own experience. We discriminate based upon Guru, Sadhu and Shastra. There are many interpretations and applications of truth. Following closely in the footsteps of our beloved Guru Maharaj is the safest path. The love Srila

Prabhupada's intimate associates have for him shines through. Their flaws are simply like spots on the Moon.

Comment posted by Kushadevidasi.AC BSP on December 6th, 2012

21Unregistered

@ Keshava Krsna Prabhu #9

You typed:

"That reference was written in early 1969. During those times, as Govinda Mataji can attest, Iskcon was still in the 'close family' mode. Indeed, Govinda Mataji was Srila Prabhupada's secretary for a while. Three disciple couples were to travel to London to set Iskcon history. Can we see why Srila Prabhupada was optimistic? (Of course he always was) "By 1975..." he wanted Bhaktivedanta namesakes. Did things happen this way? No."

Srila Prabhupada saw that many of disciples had fallen down and by 1977 he ordered that Varnashrama Dharma was to implemented and started specifically in ISKCON (Feb 14, 1977 Mayapura—Varnashrama Dharma conversation)

It should also be noted that Srila Prabhupada penned the Suniti could not be a diksha guru purport in the 4th canto in 1974, several years after that letter to Hamsadutta.

Thus his later instruction in 1974 supersedes that of 1969.

Comment posted by Sugriva das on December 6th, 2012

22Unregistered

Akruranatha

You said, "I guess some of the principles of basic morality are also necessary principles of bhakti yoga. For example, a bhakti yogi must avoid meat eating, illicit sex, intoxication and gambling. The fact that these activities are impious, papa, and will produce sinful reactions may not matter as much to a devotee as the fact that these actions will displease Krishna and the spiritual master and will jeopardize one's standing in devotional service."

I don't wish to digress onto a tangent separate from the topic, but I will address this point with a couple brief examples as to what you said is not necessarily the case, as though I know some see things from that same perspective as you are propounding. Avoiding activities you mentioned as "impious, or papa" is not required for the development of sentiments of bhakti. They can definitely be obstacles to the path of bhakti if one is too caught up in them and neglecting the development of intimate relations with the Lord, but so can other things. Srila Prabhupada often spoke strongly against those activities for a reason. But these principles are not absolute. He said kshatriyas are exempt from following all those rules. But he also said that bhakti cannot be checked by any means. Here are just a couple examples:

“Even you are a drunkard, you are fond of tasting wine, I should recommend that you simply think that “This taste of wine is Krishna.” That will make a yogi of you. That will make you the greatest yogi. If you simply think this that “I am tasting wine. Oh, very nice taste. This is Krishna.”” (Stockholm, Sept. 8, 1973)

SB 1.11.19: “At the same time, many hundreds of well-known prostitutes began to proceed on various vehicles. They were all very eager to meet the Lord, and their beautiful faces were decorated with dazzling earrings, which enhanced the beauty of their foreheads.”

PURPORT

“We may not hate even the prostitutes if they are devotees of the Lord. Even to date there are many prostitutes in great cities of India who are sincere devotees of the Lord. By tricks of chance one may be obliged to adopt a profession which is not very adorable in society, but that does not hamper one in executing devotional service to the Lord. Devotional service to the Lord is uncheckable in all circumstances.”

Comment posted by bbd on December 6th, 2012

23Unregistered

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Vaidhi bhakti is specifically described by Rupa Goswami as bhakti practice that’s inspired by logic and the promise of shastra for attaining liberation from suffering and samsara. Vaidhi bhaktas think that their spiritual advancement is determined by how closely they follow the rules and regulations in shastra and the instructions of a guru. They think that if they chant a certain amount they will get a certain result, and that if they don’t chant that amount they won’t get the result. It’s all in the following of the rule. The same goes for all of their sadhana. They consider that not following any of those directives to be the cause of a denigration of consciousness from spiritual to material, from pleasing God to displeasing God, from ascending to heaven to descending to hell. They think that they are buying their way into God’s good graces and will get rewarded after death by a higher birth or in heaven (Vaikuntha).

Self-realization, bhava and prema, doesn’t come as a reward from Krishna as if he is holding out on us until we sell enough books or scrub enough pots. Vaidhi bhakti will not give you Krishna prema. One must come to raganuga bhakti to develop prema.

This is how Jiva Goswami describes raganuga-bhakti in his Bhakti Sandarbha:

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead declares (in Brahma-yamala, also quoted in texts 9 and 24 of this anuccheda):

“The Sruti and Smrti sastras are My commands. Therefore one who disobeys the scripture disobeys Me. Such a person hates Me. He may claim to be devoted to Me, but in truth he is not.””

“These words do not apply to the devotees engaged in raganuga bhakti, for such devotees are already on the right path in spiritual life. Rather, this verse is addressed to they who follow the wrong paths, the paths of heretics and atheists like Buddha, Rsabhadeva, Dattatreya and others.”

“The scriptures declare:

“A heretic opposed to the religion of the Vedas may worship his own deity. However, he will go to hell until the time when the universe is destroyed by floods.””

Comment posted by bbd on December 6th, 2012

24Unregistered

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Even though many Vedic rules are not followed in it, raganuga bhakti is not outside the path of the Vedas. Actually raganuga bhakti is the perfection of the religion described in the Vedas and the scriptures that explain the Vedas. This is so because raganuga bhakti makes one attracted (ruci) to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the Vedas are described many heretics and atheists, such as Buddha, who are opposed to the Vedas and thus are outside the sphere of Vedic religion. For example, in Srimad Bhagavatam (1.3.24) it is said:

“Then, in the beginning of Kali-yuga, the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, the son of Anjana, in the province of Gaya, just for the purpose of deluding those who are envious of the faithful theist.””

“Therefore raganuga bhakti is proper and correct. It is much better than vaidhi bhakti. The previously discussed rules of the scriptures are meant for [those who seek] merging into the existence of the Lord.”

The point I am making is not to get caught up in the social customs and taboos of Hindu society. True bhakti is about the development of rasa. Radha Krishna is not the type of punishing fearful God as described in the Abraham and Mohamad traditions. Radha Krishna is a friend and lover, and nothing can check one’s devotional sentiments. True bhakti is about realizing God’s presence and control behind everything and everyone, and then desiring & developing an ever increasing loving relationship with Him/Her. No societal rules and regulations, dharma or adharma, body types, or birth status can check one’s bhakti. This is the message that Mahaprabhu gave to the 6 Goswamis to expound upon.

Comment posted by bbd on December 6th, 2012

25Unregistered

Part 1

Hare Krishna. All glories to His Divine Grace Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada.

BBD prabhu, in #17 & 18 you quoted Sri Ramananda Raya Samvada with Sriman Mahaprabhu in that Sriman Mahaprabhu rejected everything else except Pure Bhakti which is Prema Bhakti. Are you aware that Sriman Mahaprabhu had this conversation with Sri Ramananda Raya after taking Sannyasa when He

is (was) in Radha Bhava. Sri Radha Bhava is pure prema bhakti beyond all rules and regulations and that is every living entity's goal that is to attain Krsna Prema that Srimati Radharani possesses for Sri Krsna. This is what Sriman Mahaprabhu appeared to give to one and all. The vaidhi bhakti, varnasrama was already existing and people have been practicing time immemorial, but Krishna Prema bhakti this is something new which no one had until the arrival of Sriman Mahaprabhu. Are we liberated souls like Sri Ramananda Raya and others where we can just take off from the ground like the Swans and fly high. If not we should follow what Srila Prabhupada has given us to practice and wait for His Divine Mercy to manifest within our heart rather than quoting Divine Personalities who are beyond our material senses. Srila Prabhupada in order for everyone to receive this Krishna Prema, gave us some rules and regulations to purify ourselves in order to elevate ourselves to the platform that is required to receive this Pure Love for Sri Krishna. If we want to receive Sri Krishna Prema Bhakti then we should follow Sri Guru Srila Prabhupada's divine instruction Who is none other than the Authorized External Manifestation of Chaittya Guru Sri Krishna Paramatma. Whether Sri Krishna says it or His Divine Representative says it the effect is same and this Sri Krishna confirms in Srimad Bhagavad Gita:

“mac-citta mad-gata-prana bodha yantah parasparam

kathayantas ca mam nityam tusyanti ca ramanti ca”

“The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me.” (BG 10.9)

“tesam satata-yuktanam bhajatam priti-purvakam

dadami buddhi-yogam tam yena mam upayanti te”

“To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” (BG 10.10)

Comment posted by SriGopaldas on December 7th, 2012

26Unregistered

Continued - Part 2

“tesam evanukampartham aham ajnana-jam tamah

nasayamy atma-bhava-stho jnana-dipena bhasvata”

“To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.” (BG 10.11).

We sing the following prayers everyday in front of Srila Prabhupada. It is related to the same verse that is in Srimad Bhagavad Gita 10.11.

Cakshu dana dilo jei janme janme prabhu sei

divya jnana hrdaya prakasito

prema bhakti jaha hoite avidya vinasha jate

vede gaya jahara charito

Yasya deve para bhaktir

Yatha deve tatha gurau

Tasyaite kathita hy arthah

Prakasante mahatmanah

“Only unto those great souls who simultaneously have implicit faith in both the Lord and the Spiritual Master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.” Svetsvatara Upanisad 6.23

So let us worship that Sri Guru Srila Prabhupada and please Him in order to purify ourselves and receive that Sri Krishna Prema Bhakti that He wants all of us to have it. At the same time we should also be careful and take note of the Adi Jagatguru Sri Krishna Paramatma’s warning.

Daivi hy esa gunamayi

Mama maya duratyaya

Mam eva ye prapadyante

Mayam etam taranti te

“This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult* to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.” BG 7.14

*Actually for conditioned souls like us it is totally impossible unless Srila Prabhupada showers His Divine Mercy on us, of course, this is something the direct disciples of Srila Prabhupada has experienced it and can vouch for it.

Mac-cittah sarva-durgani

Mat-prasadat tarisyasi

Atha cet tvam ahankaran

Na srosyasi vinanksyasi

“If you become conscious of Me, you will pass over all the obstacles of conditional life by My grace. If, however, you do not work in such consciousness but act through false ego, not hearing Me, you will be lost.” (BG 18.58)

Comment posted by SriGopaldas on December 7th, 2012

27Unregistered

Continued - Part 3

The following cut and paste quotes all give us guidance towards attaining the goal that is Srimati Radharani's love for Sri Krishna which Srīman Mahāprabhu came to give.

"The Guru is not an erring mortal whose activities can be understood by the fallible reason of unreclaimed humanity. There is an eternally impassable line of demarcation between the Saviour and the saved. Those who are really saved can alone know this." (Srīla Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Srīla Prabhupada)

"...The other acaryas who appeared before Thakura Bhaktivinoda did not address their discourses so directly to the empiric thinkers. They had been more merciful to those who are naturally disposed to listen to discourses on the absolute without being dissuaded by the specious arguments of avowed opponents of Godhead. Srīla Thakura Bhaktivinoda has taken the trouble of meeting the perverse arguments of mental speculationists by the superior transcendental logic of the absolute truth. It is thus possible for the average modern readers to profit by the perusal of his writings." (Thakura Bhaktivinoda by Srīla Prabhupada (SBSST))

The following letter written by Srīla Bhaktivinoda Thakura to Srīla bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Srīla Prabhupada marks the change in Gaudiya Vaishnava approach to spread the mercy of Srīman Mahāprabhu.

"Sarasvati!

"People of this world who are proud of their own aristocratic birth cannot attain real aristocracy. Therefore they attack the pure Vaishnavas, saying, "They have taken birth in low class families because of their sins." Thus they commit offenses. The solution to this problem is to establish the order of Daivi-Varnashrama-Dharma something you have started doing; you should know that to be the real service to the Vaishnavas. Because pure devotional conclusions are not being preached, all kinds of superstitions and bad concepts are being called devotion by such pseudo-sampradayas as sahajiya atibari. Please always crush these anti-devotional concepts by preaching pure devotional conclusions and by setting an example through your personal conduct."

Sruti-smṛti-puranadi-

pancaratra-vidhim vina

Aikantiki harer bhaktir

Utpatayaiva kalpate

"Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upanisads, Puranas and Narada-pancaratra is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society." (Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu 1.2.101)

Comment posted by SriGopaldas on December 7th, 2012

28Unregistered

Continued - Part 4

akaitava krsna-prema, yena jambunada-hema,

sei prema nrloke na haya yadi haya tara yoga

na haya tabe viyoga, viyoga haile keha na jiyaya

“Pure love for Krishna, just like gold from the Jambu River, does not exist in human society. If it existed, there could not be separation. If separation were there, one could not live.” (CCM 2.43)

Srila Prabhupada’s purport from Brahma Samhita

“...Generally the worship of the Lord begins with the worship of Narayana or Visnu, whereas the worship of Lord Krsna and Radha is most confidential. Lord Narayana is worshipable by the pancaratrika-vidhi, or regulative principles, whereas Lord Krsna is worshipable by the bhagavata-vidhi. No one can worship the Lord in the bhagavata-vidhi without going through the regulations of the pancaratrika-vidhi. Actually, neophyte devotees worship the Lord according to the pancaratrika-vidhi, or the regulative principles enjoined in the Narada-pancaratra. Radha-Krsna cannot be approached by the neophyte devotees; therefore temple worship according to regulative principles is offered to Laksmi-Narayana. Although there may be a Radha-Krsna vigraha, or form, the worship of the neophyte devotees is acceptable as Laksmi-Narayana worship. Worship according to the pancaratrika-vidhi is called vidhi-marga, and worship according to the bhagavata-vidhi principles is called raga-marga. The principles of raga-marga are especially meant for devotees who are elevated to the Vrndavana platform.

Comment posted by SriGopaldas on December 7th, 2012

29Unregistered

Continued - Part 5

“...Without serving Krsna according to the vidhi-marga regulative principles of the pancaratrika-vidhi, unscrupulous persons want to jump immediately to the raga-marga principles. Such persons are called sahajiya. There are also demons who enjoy depicting Krsna and His pastimes with the gopis, taking advantage of Krsna by their licentious character. These demons who print books and write lyrics on the raga-marga principles are surely on the way to hell. Unfortunately, they lead others down with them. Devotees in Krsna consciousness should be very careful to avoid such demons. One should strictly follow the vidhi-marga regulative principles in the worship of Laksmi-Narayana, although the Lord is present in the temple as Radha-Krsna. Radha-Krsna includes Laksmi-Narayana; therefore when one worships the Lord according to the regulative principles, the Lord accepts the service in the role of Laksmi-Narayana. In The Nectar of Devotion full instructions are given about the vidhi-marga worship of Radha-Krsna, or Laksmi Narayana. Although there are sixty-four kinds of offenses one can commit in vidhi-marga

worship, in raga-marga worship there is no consideration of such offenses because the devotees on that platform are very much elevated, and there is no question of offense. But if we do not follow the regulative principles on the vidhi-marga platform and keep our eyes trained to spot offenses, we will not make progress. (Sri Brahma Samhita 5.30)

SriGopal das

Comment posted by SriGopaldas on December 7th, 2012

30Akruranatha

Caitanya Candrodaya,

You said, "I don't wish to digress onto a tangent separate from the topic, ..."

Please do digress. The topic of women serving as diksa gurus is getting too much attention at the moment; the topic of whether devotees ought to be morally good people, and why, is one that I fear gets too little attention.

"Avoiding activities you mentioned as 'impious, or papa' is not required for the development of sentiments of bhakti."

Yes, it is the glory of bhakti that even if a steadily devoted bhakta is committing abominable actions he is to be considered saintly. That does not mean one should neglect morality. In the next verse Krishna says that such a person will quickly become dharmatma, or righteous.

"The point I am making is not to get caught up in the social customs and taboos of Hindu society. True bhakti is about the development of rasa. Radha Krishna is not the type of punishing fearful God as described in the Abraham and Mohamad traditions. Radha Krishna is a friend and lover, and nothing can check one's devotional sentiments."

Well said. But... For those of us who have very little devotional sentiment, we should be very careful not to neglect the devotional rules and regulations offered by the spiritual master. Such neglect or disobedience is an offense in devotional service and is tantamount to rejecting the opportunity to come to the stage of real bhakti. "What can Nityananda do for me? They don't care." Such beasts are very ill-behaved.

Those actually situated in raga bhakti are very rare. Such devotees are conducted by the internal energy. Their senses are automatically controlled because they do not like to deviate even for a moment from serving Krishna. Naturally they will not disturb others, seeing them as His parts and parcels. If they commit some act which appears to deviate from moral standards, it will be for a higher purpose. "Though he kills men in this world, one who is not motivated by false ego does not kill."

We should not falsely presume ourselves to be on that platform. We should practice devotional service while regulating our behavior and means of livelihood according to our own natures, playing our proper social roles, with due regard for the rules of right and wrong action.

An advanced devotee may deviate from mundane morality without culpability, but generally he won't. A neophyte should never use bhakti as a rationalization or excuse for sinful or criminal conduct.

Comment posted by Akruranatha on December 7th, 2012

31Unregistered

...

The opposite is what Gaudiya Vaishnavism is supposed to be all about. They claim that the intimate approach (raga-marga) is for people so advanced that if you think you're advanced enough that you must be a fake, or what they call a sahajiya. The idea being that the more advanced you are, the more humble you should be. If you believe you're advanced enough for the raga-marga, then you're not. In that way there is a concocted ideology which keeps people fearful of practicing what the bhakti-yoga tradition of Sri Chaitanya actually promotes over everything else.

CC Ādi 4.15-16: The Lord's desire to appear was born from two reasons: the Lord wanted to taste the sweet essence of the mellows of love of God, and He wanted to propagate devotional service in the world on the platform of spontaneous attraction. Thus He is known as supremely jubilant and as the most merciful of all.

CC Ādi 4.18: "If one regards Me as the Supreme Lord and himself as a subordinate, I do not become subservient to his love, nor can it control Me."

CC Ādi 4.21-22: "If one cherishes pure loving devotion to Me, thinking of Me as his son, his friend or his beloved, regarding himself as great and considering Me his equal or inferior, I become subordinate to him."

CC Ādi 4.32: "I shall taste the essence of all these rasas, and in this way I shall favor all the devotees."

CC Ādi 4.33: "Then, by hearing about the pure love of the residents of Vraja, devotees will worship Me on the path of spontaneous love, abandoning all rituals of religiosity and fruitive activity."

That vision of your higher self is basically the opposite of what is being currently taught, which is that the goal of bhakti is to develop the mood of Krishna's friends, family, and lovers, as written about in shastra and the books of past Gaudiya acharyas. When we see what is written about that Vraja lila mood, we don't see a mood of submissive worshipful neutered servanthood with no desire to enjoy with The Lord. We see just the opposite. They have normal relationships, humanlike relationships of family, friends, and lovers. That is in fact the whole point of Krishna's youthful pastimes in Vrindavana. It's to showcase the desire for intimacy, of sharing life and love among equals, that Krishna displays his Vrindavana lila. To make that point clear, it's written that in lila he hides his true identity so that he will be treated as a human.

Comment posted by bbd on December 7th, 2012

32Unregistered

I agree with Govinda dasi that some persons may be able to place trust in a female mentor more than a male mentor due to past experiences or conditionings.

As the goal of Lord Chaitanya's movement is generously distributing Krsna consciousness to as many living entities as possible, it seems advantageous that dignified, competent, spiritually-strong women devotees, who are well-situated (i.e. healthily married and in good standing), step forward into positions where they are regularly giving guidance to younger ones, especially to younger women. I don't see it as obstructing either woman's occupational duties on either side (guru or disciple).

It would it give young women devotees the spiritual and emotional guidance they need. Women understand women, so as far as the emotional support and guidance given by the female guru, it would be naturally be more "on."

The women disciples would not have another male figure in their life which they may compartmentalize into the position of father or husband or protector. Although the guru is definitely our spiritual shelter, protector, and father, oftentimes women psychologically place the male guru into the material position of father or husband in her life, expecting certain kinds of material protection, emotional support, etc. which the male guru may not be able to and perhaps should not fulfill. We sometimes see problems in marriage relationships because the husband is given less honor or credit from the wife than she outwardly gives to her guru, and it disturbs the harmony in the relationship. Even if the guru is spotless and spiritually elevated and the husband isn't, the guru-disciple relationship should not disturb the woman's material duties as a wife.

Male gurus would have less intimate association with younger women as disciples. Less personal meetings, emails, etc. In previous times, women generally didn't take diksa initiation. Male gurus didn't have so much contact with women in this way.

I'm not necessarily saying that it specifically should be a diksa or siksa relationship. The relationships vary. Most of my siksa comes from trustworthy older devotee women. I very seldomly meet or talk with my diksa guru. I don't expect him to regularly address specific issues that I have. On the other hand, some devotees exclusively take siksa from their diksa guru only. For those who would like to have more contact & siksa with their diksa gurus, then it may be advantageous.

Comment posted by Vrndasundaridd on December 7th, 2012

33kavicandra swami

The gurus cited in the parampara list all all exceptional. There have been others who were not so prominent.

Comment posted by kavicandra swami on December 8th, 2012

34Akruranatha

“They claim that the intimate approach (raga-marga) is for people so advanced that if you think you’re advanced enough that you must be a fake, or what they call a sahajiya. The idea being that the more advanced you are, the more humble you should be. If you believe you’re advanced enough for the raga-marga, then you’re not.”

I have not heard that idea expressed that way. But I do believe there are fakes, and they do give Gaudiya Vaisnavism a bad name.

“The lotus feet of Krishna are attainable only by loving devotion. He who cultivates the preliminary devotional activities anxiously keeping in view that realized state of devotion can alone attain to that object of all endeavor.” [B.S. 5.60 Purport]

Raga marg is not something you decide to do at some point when you become advanced enough. By serving the spiritual master according to the vidhis he prescribes, actual spontaneous feeling will come out; then one can perform the same activities (book distribution, deity worship, cleaning the temple, management, discussion of Krishna consciousness among devotees, etc.) out of spontaneous love, without any fear or resentment.

But aside from that, I want to talk about right and wrong, good and bad. The Bhagavad-gita has an interesting perspective on this, and it’s Krishna’s perspective. He says that one must perform one’s own duty, even if it is covered by some fault. He says “sarvambha hi dosena”, all ventures have some fault, but nevertheless we must perform our own work while being self-controlled and unattached.

Isopanisad says that the whole universe all around us is owned and controlled by Krishna, that we must accept for ourselves what is set aside as our quota and not encroach on the wealth of others. These statements regarding ethics should be topics for discussion among devotees.

It is not the case that devotees in raga marg give up the preaching mission or lose interest in the Bhagavad-gita and Isopanisad and only want to hear about confidential lila, shunning discussion of philosophy. That is a misconception. If that were the case, then why would Srila Prabhupada have bothered to write so many books, and engage us in studying and distributing them? He is certainly a prema bhakta fully situated in spontaneous love, yet he never stopped preaching and pushing on this Movement.

We should all agree that those who have little attraction for chanting or following Guru’s orders can have little genuine raga.

Comment posted by Akruranatha on December 8th, 2012

35Akruranatha

Those who have material bodies have to somehow remain alive. Very advanced devotees may adopt the practice of wandering with no possessions, eating and drinking when someone offers them something. For most people that would be way too austere. We can’t simply “pretend” ourselves into the liberated condition. Krishna does not demand such austerity from us.

Krishna says it is impossible for an embodied being to give up all activities, but one who renounces the fruits of action is truly renounced. (B.G. 18.11) Even the wandering mendicants and paramahansas still engage their senses in activities of different kinds, like walking, talking, bowing down, praying, encouraging the people in general to chant Hare Krishna.

For most of us, we have to earn a living, pay a mortgage (or rent), buy insurance, put food on the table for our families. In this day and age we have to own a car, send our kids and grandkids to school. Being a devotee of Krishna does not mean one has to give up such things.

“One who is in Krishna consciousness should not give up earning money out of fear that he is performing fruitive activities. If by working one can engage his money in Krsna consciousness, or if by rising early in the morning once can advance his transcendental Krsna consciousness, one should not desist out of fear or because such activities are considered troublesome. Such renunciation is in the mode of passion.”
[B.G. 18.8 Purport]

Of course, those who are truly renounced may remain brahmacaris or become sannyasis, but if they adopt the dress of renunciates to get donations while continuing to think of sex enjoyment, they are pretenders. [See, B.G. 3.6-7]

We all have some role to play in the universe, in human society and the economy, according to the arrangement of Krishna. That is the “isavasyam” conception. We can go on properly playing our roles while chanting our prescribed rounds and serving the preaching mission according to our capacity. We should not think that real ruci, asakti, bhava and prema is only available to sannyasis.

Actually western, egalitarian culture, with its emphasis on women in the workplace and abolishing aristocracy and “leveling” of social status is an anomaly, but these are part of the times we live in. We do not have to side with the reactionaries. We can play our conditional roles according to prevailing mores while keeping our focus on progressive cultivation of Krishna consciousness.

Comment posted by Akruranatha on December 8th, 2012

36Unregistered

Akruranatha

“Raga marg is not something you decide to do at some point when you become advanced enough. By serving the spiritual master according to the vidhis he prescribes, actual spontaneous feeling will come out; then one can perform the same activities (book distribution, deity worship, cleaning the temple, management, discussion of Krishna consciousness among devotees, etc.) out of spontaneous love, without any fear or resentment.”

Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes in Shri Chaitanya Shikshamrita:

“When raga develops, the path of vidhi loses its effectiveness. But as long as raga does not develop, one must take shelter of vidhi. This is imperative for man. Therefore, scriptures outline these two paths. The path of raga is extremely independent or individualistic; there are no set rules.”

In Bhakti Rasamrta Sindhu Rupa Goswami describes the qualification for vaidhi and raganuga bhakti:

yatra ragan avaptatvat

pravrttir upajayate

sasanenaiva sastrasya

sa vaidha bhaktir ucyate

“When bhakti is not roused in the heart of an individual from a spontaneous love or liking for it, but is called up by the injunctions of the Scriptures, it is called Vaidhi-Bhakti

tat-tad-bha’ vadi-madhurye

srute dhir yad apeksate

natra sastram na yuktim ca

tal lobhotpatti-laksanam

“When someone hears about the sweet relationships of the devotees of Vrndavana—he becomes inclined in that way, and his intelligence becomes attracted. Indeed, he begins to covet that particular type of devotion. When such covetousness is awakened, one’s intelligence no longer depends on the instruction of sastra, revealed scripture, logic or argument.”

Comment posted by bbd on December 10th, 2012

37Unregistered

All that is required to take up the path of raganuga bhakti is the desire to be in a close relationship with Radha Krishna. Rupa Goswami says that the only thing required is lobha.

Visvanath Chakravarti Thakura comments in his Raga Vartma Chandrika:

“Srila Rupa Goswami has personally given the following definition of lobha:

“When the heart yearns for the sweetness of the moods of Krishna and His eternal associates in Vraja, and one is not prompted by scriptural injunctions or logical arguments, then that is the definition of sacred greed.

If one thinks “let such greed arise in me also”, after hearing about moods such as the transcendental conjugal mood toward Krishna of His associates the gopis in Vraja, then one need not wait for suitable sanctions from the revealed scriptures or logical arguments.

If such impetuses are there, then it cannot be justly called lobha. This greed never arises in anyone on such basis, nor does the candidate ever consider whether he is qualified for the path of raganuga bhakti or not.

Rather, simply after hearing about the subject matter, or seeing it, that greed will arise in him.

There are two causes for the appearance of greed:

The mercy of God or the mercy of another anuragi devotee.

There are again two kinds of mercy bestowed by a devotee:

Praktana and adhunika. Praktana means mercy bestowed by a raganuga in a previous life, and adhunika is mercy bestowed in the present birth.

The praktana devotee takes shelter of the lotus feet of a raganuga guru after the greed has arisen in him, and the adhunika will get that greed only after having surrendered to the feet of such a guru.

It is said: "The only causes of the appearance of greed is the mercy of Krishna or His devotee. Therefore some call the path of raganuga bhakti pusti marga.""

That is the authentic teachings of Gaudiya Vaishnavism on the difference between vaidhi and raganuga bhakti.

Comment posted by bbd on December 10th, 2012

38Unregistered

You then said:

"Those who have material bodies have to somehow remain alive. Very advanced devotees may adopt the practice of wandering with no possessions, eating and drinking when someone offers them something. For most people that would be way too austere. We can't simply "pretend" ourselves into the liberated condition. Krishna does not demand such austerity from us."

You are right, Krsna does not demand austerity. Austerity has no bearing on real sentiments of bhakti. Where is the question of austerity for those in Vraja lila? The more austere a person may be does not mean the deeper and more intimate a relationship one has with Radha Krsna. Austerity is not the path to prema-bhakti.

In the Gita, Krsna is not demanding tapasya (austerity) from Arjuna. Krsna is advising him to let go of his illusion (his sense of control over anything), and give up the idea of dharma, and see Krsna's supreme control over everyone and everything. That is when self-realization begins.

SB 11.28.6-7: "The Supersoul alone is the ultimate controller and creator of this world, and thus He alone is also the created. Similarly, the Soul of all existence Himself both maintains and is maintained, withdraws and is withdrawn. No other entity can be properly ascertained as separate from Him, the

Supreme Soul, who nonetheless is distinct from everything and everyone else. The appearance of the threefold material nature, which is perceived within Him, has no actual basis. Rather, you should understand that this material nature, composed of the three modes, is simply the product of His illusory potency.”

Material nature is illusory because it is actually paramatma controlling everyone and everything. Nothing is independent of paramatma.

Comment posted by bbd on December 10th, 2012

39Basu Ghosh Das

GBC resolution 305 of 2009 and GBC Resolution 425 of 2005 both state the need for female diksha gurus in ISKCON;

2) Whereas, the statement “there is a factual need for more diksha gurus in ISKCON to accommodate worldwide preaching” can be met by following the traditional system of male diksha gurus, “as is the rule” in the Gaudiya Sampradaya, all other Vaishnava Sampradayas, the teachings of Srila Prabhupada in SB 4.12.32, 7.11.25, and in many other places;

3) Whereas, one need not have a formal position of either shiksha or diksha guru to preach Krishna Consciousness or to do enthusiastic service, nor does the principle of offering respect and protection to women imply that they be offered such formal positions of spiritual authority;

4) Whereas, in the Gaudiya Vaishnava line, there are a few “rare” exceptional examples of female diksha gurus, (all of whom were “liberated souls”) and that by institutionalizing the appointment of female diksha gurus, it thus becomes a rule, and not an “exception” to the rule;

5) Whereas, instituting fundamental and monumental changes in well established Vaishnava tradition and adjusting the rules of dharma shastra, are the prerogatives of empowered acharyas;

6) Whereas empowered acharyas such as Srila Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur did make path breaking adjustments to tradition, but they did not, in practice or in their teachings, provide for female diksha gurus;

7) Whereas, considering all of the above, the IRGB submits that it is inappropriate for the GBC body to venture into a domain of this nature that has momentous and far reaching implications of a permanent nature for the Krishna Consciousness movement;

Therefore, the IRGB humbly requests the GBC to suspend both resolution 305 of 2009 and resolution 425 of 2005 until in depth discussion on the topic can take place with representatives of both points of view-pro and con.

Comment posted by Basu Ghosh Das on December 12th, 2012

40Basu Ghosh Das

Just to clarify the resolution I posted, above, was passed by the ISKCON India Regional Governing Body (IRGB) during October of 2010, and has been submitted as a formal resolution for GBC consideration at the upcoming GBC AGM during February/March 2013.

Comment posted by Basu Ghosh Das on December 12th, 2012

41Basu Ghosh Das

@ Kusha devi dasi's comment #20:

Not sure how you remembered me here, Mataji, since till today I hadn't commented on Govinda dasi's article.

However, since you mentioned my name (even if you spelled "Ghosh" as "Gosh" [as in "oh my gosh!"]), I hope you won't mind my responding to what you wrote. Or maybe you meant to comment on what someone else wrote, and mistakenly wrote my name? Whatever! :-)

Sadly, many of Srila Prabhupada's intimate associates in Western bodies (yes, like our's), fell away from ISKCON, bhakti, and became degraded. Prabhupada himself stated that he didn't have so much personal association with his Guru Maharaj.

My contention is simple, let us understand the issue of female diksha guru should be through shastras, and the instructions of Prabhupada and our previous (purva) acharyas (teachers/gurus).

First of all, "diksha" is one of the samskaras, and that is conferring the sacred thread. The sacred thread is not conferred to females. Just like sannyas.

Prabhupada wrote about this numerous times in his purports. For example in CC Madhya 24.330:

"He is then recommended for a second initiation, during which a sacred thread is offered and the disciple is accepted as a bona fide brahmana. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura introduced the system of giving the sacred thread to a bona fide Vaishnava, and we are following in his footsteps."

The system that Prabhupada refers to IS the Panchatratrika system. We all know that females are NOT conferred the sacred thread, so how can they act as diksha guru?

Why not be satisfied with grihasta dharma — household duties — that are recommended for women by Prabhupada in numerous places? Be the patha pradarshaka & shiksha guru of your children & other women. Why imitate the men?

My contention is that the demand for female diksha guru is simply the subtle contamination of the egalitarian outlook of modern Western society, that we Westerners cannot remove from our psyche!

This outlook is deep rooted in the USA, where in the US Declaration of Independence it is written:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the of the governed”.

Comment posted by Basu Ghosh Das on December 12th, 2012

42Basu Ghosh Das

Further to the above comment on Kusha devi dasi’s comment #6

The “self evidence” that all men are created equal, is in contradiction with Lord Krishna’s instructions in Bhagavad-gita 4.13:

“According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me. And although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the nondoer, being unchangeable.

PURPORT [By Prabhupada]

The Lord is the creator of everything. Everything is born of Him, everything is sustained by Him, and everything, after annihilation, rests in Him. He is therefore the creator of the four divisions of the social order, beginning with the intelligent class of men, technically called brahmanas due to their being situated in the mode of goodness. Next is the administrative class, technically called the kshatriyas due to their being situated in the mode of passion. The mercantile men, called the vaisyas, are situated in the mixed modes of passion and ignorance, and the sudras, or laborer class, are situated in the ignorant mode of material nature. In spite of His creating the four divisions of human society, Lord Krishna does not belong to any of these divisions, because He is not one of the conditioned souls, a section of whom form human society. Human society is similar to any other animal society, but to elevate men from the animal status, the above-mentioned divisions are created by the Lord for the systematic development of Krishna consciousness. The tendency of a particular man toward work is determined by the modes of material nature which he has acquired. Such symptoms of life, according to the different modes of material nature, are described in the Eighteenth Chapter of this book.”

So, while the souls are equal, when they are embodied there are differences, and varying duties according to these differences! That is our ideological outlook, at least if we accept the teachings of the Gita and Prabhupada!

Comment posted by Basu Ghosh Das on December 12th, 2012