

KRISHNA KIRTI DASA

Self-Identity, Conflict and Commonwealth within ISKCON

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A response to Babhru Prabhu's early notes

By Krishna Kirti Das

March 14, 2012

Dear Babhru Prabhu, please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Thank you for your essay on the need for pursuing a more elevated rhetoric of Krishna Consciousness. I remember that eight or nine years ago when I wrote regularly for my own web log, siddhanta.com, you used to frequent it as a commentator and offered me the same advice. I like to think that I took your advice back then, though I have not always succeeded in following it. At the very least, I think it improved my own ability to get my point across to others. I remember having thanked you over the years for having reached out to me, despite our otherwise different outlooks.

As to your essay, and your desire to have a conversation about rhetoric (and eventually about "unity in diversity" itself), I do not think that at as a society at this time that we want either an improvement in public rhetoric or unity in diversity, however much some of us ask for it. I believe this overall lack of desire for either has much to do with the way we think of others. A brief example of a failure of polite discussion will illustrate why.

Years ago I had approached another devotee to discuss a matter that was of concern to me, and I had also requested another devotee to moderate the discussion, which he kindly did. After some email exchanges with the other devotee, which were mainly to ascertain more accurately his perspective, I finally presented to him my specific objections to his point of view. His response, however, was a brief dismissal. He wrote that he was "flooded with devotional service" and that he had no time to continue with our correspondence. What is more, the devotee I had requested to moderate the discussion openly supported the other devotee's rationale for ending it. Although I had anticipated this kind of response, it still left me deeply disappointed. My only consolation from that failed discussion was that I had made a good faith effort to conduct my side of it politely. Indeed, the other two devotees in their closing remarks had thanked me for my politeness throughout the exchange. At the very least, I knew that further discussion, however polite, would be impossible.

This story is a permutation of the surgeon's infamous declaration: "The operation was a success but the patient died." It suggests that the doctors misunderstood the patient's condition and tried to fix the

wrong thing. Or it suggests that the patient's death was inevitable. Similarly, an improved rhetoric will not necessarily lead to better relationships among devotees, for the ill rhetoric itself may instead be the symptom of deeper, underlying factors that produce it, much as how a persistent, high fever is still the effect of an underlying, life-threatening disease.

As the story illustrates, once the ill rhetoric had been stripped out of the discourse, the true causes for dissension became apparent: our differences were so deep that one or the other among us found the other's position to be so morally out-of-bounds that his proposition was beneath discussion. Discussion, what to speak of cooperation, became impossible on account of difference. Insofar as difference and diversity refer to the same categories of thought and experience, the problem of rhetoric and of other kinds of deep dissension are directly failures to realize unity in diversity.

Thus while I believe that the advice you give in your essay is valuable—we all should strive to use words that are satyam priyam hitam, truthful, pleasing, and beneficial to others—the fact that more refined forms of condescension and disregard for others co-exist with cruder name-calling means that attempts to improve rhetoric society-wide are unlikely to succeed. It could just as easily produce a more refined expression of envy. My proposition therefore is that rather than approach the problem indirectly through a long process of enculturation, the better way to approach the problem will be to make direct progress toward finding unity in diversity.

If diversity without unity is a reflection of our separation from Krishna, then it is also a representation of our envy. We are envious of others if and only if we are disconnected from Krishna. Consider this prayer by Prahlada Maharaja,

svasty astu visvasya khalah prasidatam dhyayantu bhutani sivam mitho dhiya

manas ca bhadram bhajatad adhokshaje avesyatam no matir apy ahaituki

“May there be good fortune throughout the universe, and may all envious persons be pacified. May all living entities become calm by practicing bhakti-yoga, for by accepting devotional service they will think of each other's welfare. Therefore let us all engage in the service of the supreme transcendence, Lord Sri Krishna, and always remain absorbed in thought of Him” (SB 5.18.9).

Important in this verse is the proposition that the bhakti-yoga counteracts envy. As Srila Prabhupada says in the purport, “If the Krishna consciousness movement spreads all over the world, and if by the grace of Krishna everyone accepts it, the thinking of envious people will change. Everyone will think of the welfare of others.” It is easy to see how the ill rhetoric will go away if devotees in general are nicely worshipping the Lord through bhakti.

Conversely, if devotees are not thinking of each other's welfare, it means there is some discrepancy in their devotional service that accounts for continued, envious dealings amongst themselves. Every devotee in our society who is not free from the four defects of a conditioned soul has some measure of envy left in him. If given an opportunity, that envy will manifest in one way or another. Although we are

on the path of bhakti, we still have a long way to go before we are finally free from maya. And because much of our behavior is social, envy is not merely a personal shortcoming. It is a social problem as well.

Managing envy at the level of society is the goal of varnashrama-dharma. Though bhakti-yoga is the true and only medicine for reviving our lost relationship with Krishna, varnashrama-dharma's relationship with bhakti is something like this: If someone has an acute fever, his temperature might kill him before the disease itself ever does. To prevent that from happening, wet towels are placed on the sick man's body to bring his temperature down. The wet towel will not cure him, but it will keep him alive long enough to give the medicine a chance to act. In the same way, varnashrama-dharma through its culture and social structure helps to keep our envious tendencies in check long enough for the bhakti process to purify us. As the Lord says in the Gita,

yesham tv anta-gatam papam jananam punya-karmanam

te dvandva-moha-nirmukta bhajante mam dridha-vratah

"Persons who have acted piously in previous lives and in this life and whose sinful "actions are completely eradicated are freed from the dualities of delusion, and they engage themselves in My service with determination" (BG 7.28)

Although I think your proposition is a positive move, I think it will at best achieve only marginal improvement, if any at all, in the overall quality of rhetoric. That is because I see proximity rather than lack of refinement to be the more immediate problem. Sometimes to keep two or more people from fighting they have to be kept far apart. And within our society there are some differences that probably cannot be solved any other way than by distance. A necessary first step toward resolving them will first be to at least acknowledge we have them.

But acknowledging them at all is not an easy thing to do. And I think a difficulty with your own analysis is that you give insufficient weight to the nature of existing differences. The particulars do matter. For example, you wrote, "Sannyasi A rips into Sannyasi B for being too liberal, and Sannyasi C goes after Sannyasi A for being too medieval in his approach." But despite the even-handedness of your reprimand, it is too abstract. It gives the impression that Sannyasis A, B, and C are "ripping" each other over some picayune matter. But that is not necessarily true. The matter may be important after all.

For example, a sannyasi recently told me that he had been invited to Mayapura to participate in some planning committees around the time of the GBC meetings, and he replied that he did not want to participate in them because they involved interaction between men and women. Another sannyasi I know, however, thinks there is nothing wrong with mixed-company meetings as long as they are public and the participants deal with each other like ladies and gentlemen. "Why waste the talent of so many qualified women?" In response, the traditionalist sannyasi narrates an incident in which an otherwise decent devotee went to an ISKCON management seminar and at the meeting fell in love with another devotee, who also fell for him. He ended up divorcing his wife, who was born to devotee parents, and left her to raise their newborn infant on her own. (This is a true story, by the way.)

Thus once we get beyond abstractions and consider particulars, we find that not only are there substantial points on both sides, but that different groups of devotees are deeply passionate about them. This partly accounts for the rancorous nature of some disputes. Furthermore, since questions of self-identity are involved, resolution of differences between devotees on such issues is typically beyond discussion.

To the extent that our self-identity is a manifestation of our material conditioning, it is a function of the false-ego, the ahankara. Being a man, a woman, or someone from one country or another are some obvious manifestations of false-ego, which may also take on an overtly religious identity. In North America, for example, members of the Amish community are so fastidious about repaying money they owe that banks will guarantee their loans without any of the usual credit reports or background checks. For the Amish, to miss a payment is such a personal and social shame that none dare be late. Devotees, for example, consider being vegetarian an integral part of what it means to be a devotee. If some devotee is found to be addicted to eating meat, the entire devotee community will reject him. Whether that self-identity is grounded in false-ego or is a mixture of false-ego and true identity, conceptions of “I” and “mine” are very strong and typically beyond the reach of rationality. That matters because mind and intelligence are subservient to the ahankara.

An existential conflict is a conflict in which one or more parties are fighting for their lives or self-identities. It may be a single person in a life-threatening situation, or it may a situation where his world has been turned upside-down in other ways. In mortal terms, a cornered and wounded animal baring its teeth is fighting for its existence. A small nation-state surrounded by larger, more populous enemies is always anxious and ever-ready to stave off the next invasion.

In more ideal or spiritual terms, an existential struggle involves the threat of a fundamental change to one’s self-identity. If someone in our society, for example, seriously proposed that we started cooking meat in our temples, continued to insist on it, and somehow through propaganda gathered a following that continued to advocate it, the conflict between that group and others would indeed be a major upheaval. That is why existential conflicts are the most fiercely contested—one is literally fighting for his life or identity. That is also why the term “culture war” is applied to conflicts which involve shifting values that are fundamental to a population’s shared self-identity.

The disputes over which we in ISKCON have had some of our nastiest exchanges have been significantly existential. Perhaps the grandmother of them all has been conflict over the social status and role of women in ISKCON. That in itself has indirectly or directly touched deeply almost every contested issue from guru-tattva to varnashrama-dharma. That is probably never going away, and yes, it remains existential.

Sometimes it is perversely refreshing to come upon a bitter conflict that does not significantly involve women at some level. The fall of the jiva (or not) from the spiritual world was one such past issue. That conflict especially involved issues of authority. Some devotees had a lot to lose in that debate. Others might argue we all had a lot to lose, which could explain why that dispute had an existential dimension to it (at least for some).

A more recent conflict involves the role and nature of charity within ISKCON. That conflict has an existential dimension because it involves the question of whether large-scale charity is moving us toward success in preaching or toward failure through a reorientation of ISKCON toward karma-kanda. Again, questions of fundamental identity are involved, and it has therefore been significantly bitter. Attempts to improve the rhetoric in these conflicts will hardly make a difference. They are the stuff that schisms are made out of.

Not every conflict, of course, is so strongly existential. They typically involve bad interpersonal dealings. For example, a devotee who does not return a loan to another devotee gives rise to conflict. Perhaps someone is proud of being the one to make Krishna's garland and won't let anyone else make it, and conflict arises. False-ego is involved, of course, but the question of whether it is worthwhile to make the garland does not arise. The question involves who gets to make it. Or someone just gets thrown out of a temple and then blasts his indignation on any number of websites. In terms of frequency, these more private conflicts are the most common.

What seems to distinguish these more pedestrian conflicts from the larger, schism-producing conflicts is that a fundamental, shared communal value is not being questioned within the former while it is being questioned within the latter. No group of devotees is going to have a schism because, as sad as it may be, such-and-such das and his family got kicked out of a temple. But having a schism over women's roles? It's typical.

In order to reduce tensions between groups of devotees who have significantly different outlooks on Krishna consciousness, it is probably necessary to grant them a greater degree of autonomy than is currently allowed. That might mean, for example, giving these differing groups the authority, or *adhikara*, to decide who their gurus and *sannyasis* will be. For example, a significant number of devotees have been disappointed that women in ISKCON have not been allowed to become initiating spiritual masters. And even when a few are allowed to initiate, these devotees will probably continue to be disappointed with what they will see as a low representation of women among the ranks of ISKCON's gurus. More and more of these devotees have come to think of having more autonomy as the means of rectifying what they see as a spiritual injustice.

Thus two high-level proposals have been proffered to correct the problem: the 2005 Shastric Advisory Committee's paper on female *diksha-gurus* directly supports this. Indirectly supporting the 2005 paper is the committee's 2010 paper advising the GBC to give more authority to individuals to select their own spiritual master. There is little doubt that some of the authors of the 2010 paper, while writing it, had in mind the fact that not one woman had been given the authority to act as *diksha-guru* since the 2005 paper, despite the GBC's public endorsement. Granting more autonomy in spiritual matters to individuals and to communities is an idea that some reputable devotees have already expressed, and for reasons similar to mine.

In order to facilitate this at a political level, ISKCON would function more like a commonwealth. A modern commonwealth like today's British Commonwealth, for example, connects many countries and cultures that are quite different from one another. India, Pakistan, Australia, and Nigeria, to name a few,

have very different cultures and histories, and they manage their own affairs and governments. Some of these countries have done quite well on their own, like India and Australia. Other countries not so well. Yet despite the diversity there is a common recognition among them of a unity (however limited) that contributes toward a common good (hence the name “commonwealth”). In order to allow unity and diversity to find its own level among different groups of devotees, they need the kind of autonomy a modern commonwealth might give to its member states.

ISKCON as a commonwealth would help alleviate dissension among devotees in two ways: it would help keep far enough apart devotees whose differences inevitably bring them into conflict, and it would give an opportunity to each community to develop their own way of life in pursuance of the Krishna conscious ideal.

As regards to giving devotees who are inclined to disagree more distance from each other, that is a Vaishnava solution. Lord Balarama and Shri Vidura went on pilgrimage instead of staying to face the heat of dissent. Lord Shiva left the sacrificial arena when his followers and the followers of Daksha began to quarrel. We should be willing to encourage more separation at times. Indeed, sometimes permanent separation is required. And we should be more open to encouraging that too. They are Vaishnava solutions and should therefore never be off the table.

This greater autonomy will provide different groups of like-minded devotees an opportunity to develop their own way of realizing the Krishna conscious ideal, which they otherwise would not have to develop into coherent spiritual communities. Take for example the problem of child abuse in our own society. In order to combat it, we have within ISKCON a strong institution to protect children, and it has popular support. However, while some devotees see this development as a remarkable achievement, others see it as a remarkable failure.

Why a failure? There are several reasons, some of which include:

- * ISKCON’s first purpose is to teach the techniques of spiritual life in order to reverse the imbalance of values in life within society at large. Our current child-protection regime, however, relies primarily on techniques taken from an already misguided society.

- * Western society in particular is already way over-sexed, and that is in no small part due to the psychology profession’s efforts to valorize sex life we have always defined as illicit. Why should we trust their solutions when the profession and the academic discipline in important ways are against our ideals?

- * From a preaching perspective, the more we adopt mainstream society’s way of life, the less we have that is unique to offer to people interested in an alternative.

Some devotees will undoubtedly roll their eyes at reading this brief list of objections to the current regime of moral policing within our ranks. But that kind of condescending response underscores my point that important differences like this are rarely settled by discussion. In such cases, separation may be the best spiritual choice.

Like you, I believe that the character of rhetoric in our society is dangerously belligerent. It is the cause of much offense that will check the spiritual lives of many devotees, and it is all but impossible to remain aloof from it. However, I differ from you in that I do not attribute the primary cause of this to a lack of maturity or lack of refinement. Even devotees who are advanced in good manners have made their own polite contributions to the present malaise.

Instead, I see that devotees have deep disagreements about non-trivial matters and that the differences in some cases are so stark that it has become all but impossible to discuss them. Thus over the years I have advised many devotees that it is better to keep themselves at a distance, if not leave entirely, in order to peacefully build the kind of Krishna conscious society that is more according to their realization and liking.

Separate communities with their own internal, spiritual authority structures and loose affiliations with each other fostered within a commonwealth would allow communities of devotees that have deep differences to pursue their own solutions in tandem and with far less risk of committing Vaishnava aparadha.

Respectfully, your servant,

Krishna Kirti Das

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1Sita Rama 108

Krishna Kirti Prabhu

You say, "Separate communities with their own internal, spiritual authority structures and loose affiliations with each other fostered within a commonwealth would allow communities of devotees that have deep differences to pursue their own solutions in tandem and with far less risk of committing Vaishnava aparadha".

You give many facts in this article but I do not see how the above conclusion logically follows those facts. It is a fact that respectful communication and a clear understanding of all perspectives are required but not necessarily sufficient to resolve conflicts; because people may see they have irreconcilable differences. It is also a fact that after determining this; the best policy is to stop discussing the contentious issue.

But "separate communities with their own, internal spiritual authority structures" will never result in a stoppage of expressing contentious issues. The implicit reason for separating into separate communities is so individuals can continue to assert their various contentions. This will not result in far less Vaishnava aparadha, it will result in an increase of contentions among separated groups, and then a further distance (a breaking of the "loose affiliation") will be required. In contrast when people need to work closely together they must put aside their differences, and thus the possibility of agreeing to disagree, and a reduction of the conflict is quite possible.

That is what Srila Prabhupada pleaded with the members of ISKCON to do. The family analogy can be made. At weddings Srila Prabhupada instructed couples not to separate despite the fact that some bitter arguments may exist. Fighting among family members is unavoidable but due to affection that fighting is quickly forgotten. We are a family of devotees we do not have to stop working with other members even though we disagree about matters that are important to us. The importance of "cooperating among ourselves" to show love for Srila Prabhupada is the most sacred value. However much we consider our differing perspectives necessary and sacred, this order of the Founder Acarya trumps all those concerns, because it is the value sacred above all other values.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on March 23rd, 2012

2Visakha Priya dasi

Dear Krishna Kirti Prabhu,

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

I really like your analysis. Usually, when I have arguments with devotees regarding fundamental issues, I always end up quoting the ISKCON saying that "Srila Prabhupada built a house in which the whole world can live" and the Christian saying "In My Father's kingdom there are many mansions" as the way to solve the problem. The goal is krsna-prema. No one will contest that, no matter where he or she stands in devotional service. And the main injunction for vaidhi-sadhana bhakti is smartavyah satatam

visnur/vismartavyo na jatucit/sarve viddhi nisedha syur/etayor eva kinkarah. In other words, the principle is to always remember Krsna and never forget Him and how we do is a detail. As stated by Srila Rupa Goswami and explained by Srila Prabhupada in NOD, principles cannot be changed but details vary according to time, place, and circumstances.

So I thank you for making that clear. What you propose seems to be the only way to prevent schisms. May Krsna grant us the maturity to execute this plan so that we may all progress and flourish spiritually—thus saving the world in its darkest hour.

Your servant,

Visakha Priya dasi

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

3krishna-kirti

Dear Sita Rama 108, my obeisances to you. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

You wrote,

“separate communities with their own, internal spiritual authority structures” will never result in a stoppage of expressing contentious issues. The implicit reason for separating into separate communities is so individuals can continue to assert their various contentions. This will not result in far less Vaishnava aparahadha, it will result in an increase of contentions among separated groups. . .

This is an empirically verifiable assertion, and as such I believe the weight of the evidence is strongly against it.

One recent example includes ISKCON working together with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to help combat the opposition in some part of Russia to the legitimacy of the Bhagavad-gita in general and the legitimacy of Srila Prabhupada’s bhashya on the same in particular. The differences between the two communities on certain philosophical precepts are profound, as the VHP is by tradition and doctrine oriented toward Advaita Vedanta. But cooperation is possible because distance between the two communities is limited, which in turn allows cooperation in limited areas. Members of the two communities have plenty of reason to criticize each other. But distance not only minimizes the possibility of offense but makes cooperation possible.

Another recent example includes brahmacharis from a Gaudiya Math institution coming for a brief visit at my home. We received them well, fed them nice prasadam, had wonderful kirtanas, and had some satisfying philosophical discussion. Again, what made this possible is some distance between our two communities. There are certain boundaries we must observe in order not to end up in a circumstance in which we are perpetually committing Vaishnava aparadha. If communities of devotees with one or more deep differences are going to cooperate, keeping a respectful distance as in these two cases is how it will occur.

Minimizing Vaishnava aparadha is a necessary condition for the growth of spiritual communities, and maintaining a sufficient distance between devotees with strong difference is one of the most effective means of minimizing offense. In the body of my essay I have already provided the shastric references to support this thesis.

My next comment will address your initial objection, that development of spiritual communities does not logically follow from their separation.

Comment posted by krishna-kirti on March 24th, 2012

4krishna-kirti

Dear Sita Rama 108, my obeisances to you. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

You wrote, "You give many facts in this article but I do not see how the above conclusion [separate communities with loose affiliations within a commonwealth] logically follows those facts." You are right that the development of these communities does not necessarily follow. But it cannot because developing into a spiritual community still depends on many choices apart from the necessity of minimizing offenses to Vaishnavas. Devotees who disagree with each other too much will not be able to make nice progress toward their respective realizations as long as they remain too close. My point here is that encouraging some distance will open up the possibility of developing each's realization to their fullest extent.

The reason that is necessary is that deep differences are seldom limited to a single, atomized issue. The world view of each side is typically comprised of related values that cluster together. I mentioned the Amish community's fastidiousness in repaying debts. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we can get everyone to be just like the Amish in paying what they owe? It would solve many problems nationally and internationally, too. But that high degree of fidelity to financial matters happens to be part and parcel of a particular world view and self-identity that few people are willing to adopt. It will be practically impossible to follow it unless you also adopt the rest of the Amish way of life (or a way of life that in many other important respects closely resembles the Amish outlook). The fact is that people who praise the Amish for their thriftiness are not about to take up the Amish way of life. They would rather live in a society in that tolerates and occasionally forgives lapses of financial misconduct than be like the Amish.

In the same way, devotees who have deep differences over social issues usually have deep difference in approaching shastra, SP's statements, etc. For example, some devotees believe that a spiritually healthy society makes room for women's occupational involvement at all levels of ISKCON whereas others believe that will perpetuate our present culture of sexual misbehavior (divorce, infidelity, breaking celibacy, etc). The commonwealth solution will give different communities the chance to realize their solutions, for one will interfere with the other's attempt to realize their own way of life because they see it as morally repugnant.

Comment posted by krishna-kirti on March 24th, 2012

5krishna-kirti

Dear Mother Vishakha Priya, please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Thank you for your kind words and appreciation. You are well aware of my own angst on these issues. And as you know, I used to maintain a blog that addressed them. Some of my best writing had been produced during that time. (I also produced a lot of bad writing, too.)

However, at some point I noticed that positions on different sides were hardening, not softening. And I did not want to spend the rest of my life wrangling with people that would continue to disagree on certain fundamental issues. Furthermore, I was not willing to volunteer my time to causes which I found to be out of line with the teachings of our sampradaya.

However, knowing that there are communities of devotees that think very differently from the community I identify with and who also have their own share of angst on these matters (I mentioned some of them in my essay), the “commonwealth” model seems to be the best approach short of kicking others out or having them finally leave of their own accord. This is my way of saying to others I disagree with, “this is how we can both get the freedom we need to pursue our visions to their logical conclusions.”

Once again, thank you, and I hope you are well.

Your servant, Krishna Kirti Das

Comment posted by krishna-kirti on March 24th, 2012

6Sita Rama 108

Mother Visakha Priya,

Separate communities with their “own internal, spiritual authority structures” fits some definitions of schisms I have found. But we do not want to get hung up on semantics. I will try to understand what YOU mean when you use the word schism in the next to the last statement in comment #2. You say, “What you propose seems to be the only way to prevent schisms” So you do not consider groups with their own spiritual authorities and only “loosely affiliated” to be schisms. It follows, when you say- what is proposed- is the only way to prevent a schism, you mean it will prevent a separation beyond the one described where a group is only “loosely affiliated” and has their own authority. Unless this total split is imminent it is not logical to say the lesser split is the only way to avoid it. I do not see evidence that such a split is unavoidable, and loose affiliations are the only alternative. However, hypothetically speaking, if this was the case, I agree that maintaining a “loose affiliation “would be better than a total split. But this would be a matter of damage control. It is not a prescription to “progress and flourish spiritually-thus saving the world in its darkest hour”. It would be a desperate attempt to maintain a semblance of a unified ISKCON in its own very dark hour. The BEST way for ISKCON to avoid schisms and flourish is to acknowledge that following the order of the Acarya is the absolute right thing to do; and it is the only way to transcend our own relative mental concoctions regarding what is best. Srila Prabhupada repeatedly asked us to cooperate under an ultimate authority, not separate into groups with their own internal authorities and relative conceptions.

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

7Sita Rama 108

Kiriti Prabhu,

I agree, for groups that are not affiliated and have fundamental differences, it is certainly prudent to remain separate. And if such groups occasionally unite on shared goals is a positive activity. However, there is no comparison with that and what you are suggesting. The VHP the Gaudiya Math, and ISKCON are not under a single ultimate authority requesting them to remain united; all members of ISKCON are. In the beginning of his will Srila Prabhupada made the GBC the ultimate authority for the entire international society. This does not exclude the possibility of the GBC allowing variations of policies in different locations. In fact this exists; last I knew women were not allowed to be pujari's in India.

So it is admitted that the GBC should be sensitive to people's ethics and make external arrangements to placate them. And a suggestion for the GBC to consider particular sensibilities is totally valid. But your position goes clearly beyond that. You repeatedly say people need to be separated so they will not offend each other. And,"The commonwealth solution will give different communities the chance to realize their solutions, for one will interfere with the others attempt to realize their own way of life because they see it as morally repugnant". Repugnant means, "arousing disgust or aversion; offensive or repulsive.

There is no justification for being disgusted and averse to a Vaisnava because they have different values. There is no justification for being offended by others and considering them repulsive. There is no justification for maintaining an attitude that compels us to offend other devotees unless we are physically distant from them. These are things that require an internal adjustment. If we are asking for a remedy exclusively on the external platform it means we are not admitting the cause is internal. We need to acknowledge that we need to overcome this degree of righteous indignation toward fellow vaisnava's. If we do not do this, external adjustment will never solve the issue. Basically we are giving our lower nature way too much legitimacy.

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

8Unregistered

Very thoughtful piece, Krsna Kirti prabhu. I think that your suggestion that ISKCON (or all Gaudiya Vaishnava communities) organize themselves as a commonwealth, with autonomous but cooperative communities, is happening already. Perhaps the ISKCON managers do not see it, but those of us in the larger congregation see it happening today. The formal structure of ISKCON means less and less to the larger body of devotees, who are increasingly organizing their own projects or communities based on common goals and ideology. Krishna consciousness is a dynamic, living process that is driven by enthusiasm and a vision to serve based on one's own propensities and resources. Our second generation, especially, sees no boundaries in where and how to share Krsna Consciousness with others. I do not find them bewildered by the same existential crises that we older devotees indulge. Women's

issue? Liberal or conservative practice of Krsna consciousness? To fall or not to fall? Krsna Consciousness is so much more than our minds.

Comment posted by Vinode Vani d.d. on March 25th, 2012

9Puskaraksa das

Dear Krishna-kirti Prabhu

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

I believe you are a disciple of Srila Bhakti Vikasa Swami. If this is correct, I would like to know if you are speaking and promoting this "Commonwealth" concept on his behalf, or if you are presenting your own ideas, on your own initiative...?

Thank you very much

Hare Krishna

Puskaraksa das - GGS

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on March 25th, 2012

10krishna-kirti

Dear Mataji Vinode Vani, please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Thank you for your kind words and appreciation.

You wrote,

Our second generation, especially, sees no boundaries in where and how to share Krsna Consciousness with others. I do not find them bewildered by the same existential crises that we older devotees indulge. Women's issue? Liberal or conservative practice of Krsna consciousness? To fall or not to fall? Krsna Consciousness is so much more than our minds.

I agree. And at this point I think it prudent to give devotees with different ideas the opportunity to pursue them, if only for the sake that if a Procrustean, one-size-fits-all approach is adhered to, a wrong decision made on a big matter won't take everyone else down. We can think of the particular, differentiated devotee communities as "social laboratories for bhakti". And if more than one succeeds, all the better.

ys, KKD

Comment posted by krishna-kirti on March 25th, 2012

11Sita Rama 108

Mother Vinoda Vani,

You say " Our second generation, especially, sees no boundaries in where and how to share Krsna Consciousness with others. I do not find them bewildered by the same existential crises that we older devotees indulge. Women's issue? Liberal or conservative practice of Krsna consciousness?" That is exactly my point. I want to see this continue. But the explicit reason for commonwealths is to establish centers where those with opposing positions are physically distant. It clearly follows- those who see no boundaries are going to be driven out of many commonwealths.

The other clue that this is a Utopian idea is we have not discussed the logistics of it. Right now there are people with opposing positions in practically every community. There is going to have to be a mass relocation project to create a situation where everyone is located in places where they are isolated from those with opposing views. Besides that imagine the tensions that will flare up in communities among those on each side of an opposing view. How will we decide what will be the official political stance in such communities and which group will be required to physically distance themselves to avoid offenses. And what about the fact that for many, if not most, devotees relocation is not an option.

Krishna Consciousness and the instructions of Srila Prabhupada are not simple some lofty ideals, they are the most practical answers to problems. Tolerance is the answer, not just because it is the order of the Acarya, but because it is practically required for a society to function. A system based on cooperation to show love for Srila Prabhupada is based on transcendental orders and it thus can bring us above the mundane platform. A system motivated by intolerance, and repugnance for those with views different from ours, is not only based on material concept, it is indulging in the lowest and most destructive aspects of the material attitudes. Basically it is not a good idea.

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

12Visakha Priya dasi

Dear Sitarama Prabhu,

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

Thank you for your enquiry and for your willingness to understand what I meant to convey. Actually, my initial reaction to reading Krishna-kirti Prabhu's article was one of relief. I felt that his views might be the only way to prevent a sizeable section of ISKCON from leaving ISKCON altogether in order to continue their spiritual journey. The outrageous "dialogue" on Dandavats, sparked by Urmila Devi's class in Mayapur last year, made me wonder how long we—the women who do not take their embodiment in women's bodies as the all-in-all—were going to be able to survive if the proponents of so-called Vedic culture (what they think it is) were going to continue flourishing without checks and balances from the highest authorities in our Society. I do not wish to discuss this whole issue in public because, as Krishna-kirti Prabhu remarked, discussing them seems to harden the respective positions rather than soften them. But each one of us is a spirit soul—brahmāṇḍa bhramite konyā bhāgyavan jiva... As Srila Prabhupada remarked, with tears in his eyes, at the conclusion of a GBC annual meeting wherein some

devotees wanted to kick the single women with children out of ISKCON: As for myself, I only want that they should not lose the opportunity to go back to Godhead in this lifetime. (This is not a verbatim quote, but the incident is recorded in the Lilamrita.) And that GBC resolution was scrapped. But after Srila Prabhupada left this world, the positions hardened again, to the point that the women are no longer trained properly in ISKCON ashrams but wander all over the earth, not knowing what to do with themselves, and getting branded as prostitutes. And what can the poor things do when all or most opportunities for devotional services have been denied to them? I, personally, am an old woman, and by Krsna's mercy I am taken care of right here in ISKCON. But this is not the general trend. The women are becoming wild and in some cases degraded because they are not protected. But being protected doesn't mean to be subjected to the daily abuses of one person who thinks himself superior just because his outward dress is different. Kalau sudra sambhavah. The process of Krsna consciousness enunciated in NOD, NOI, etc., is meant for everyone to rise to the transcendental platform.

Comment posted by Visakha Priya dasi on March 27th, 2012

13Visakha Priya dasi

Anyway, I guess I am getting carried away and had better stop. At least, Krishna-kirti Prabhu's model gives a chance to everyone to survive in Krsna consciousness. I am fully aware of the other problems you mentioned, namely the relocation of men and resources, but what to do? May Srila Prabhupada protect us all.

Your servant,

Visakha Priya dasi

Comment posted by Visakha Priya dasi on March 27th, 2012

14Akruranatha

I want to thank Krishna Kirti Prabhu for a well-written and thought-provoking article. However, I cannot bring myself to accept the premise that differences among faithful ISKCON devotees are so fundamental and irreconcilable that the only way to prevent antagonism is to stop communicating and keep ourselves physically separated. That seems like a horribly pessimistic and cynical conclusion.

Maybe I am just too naive or optimistic by nature, but I have to think that those of us who really do have firm faith in Srila Prabhupada's books, in the holy names, and in the fundamental practices of devotional service, really can bridge our differences with some concentrated effort and, of course, with polite conversation and chanting together and taking prasadam together and serving side by side.

I agree that maybe conversation alone is not enough. I also agree that there may be a variety of moods and approaches or even sub-branches within ISKCON that can co-exist peacefully within the larger movement, mission or institution. But I feel that if differences between faithful ISKCON devotees were really as impossible to reconcile as the article suggests, that would call into question the very ability of

guru parampara to transmit the authentic message and realization of the eternal, unchanging Absolute Truth across generations and geographic locations and cultural environments.

The example of the “mediation” that eventually failed was disappointing, but I do not think it means the differences between the participants were necessarily impossible to overcome. It seems that those who participated learned that their differences were perhaps deeper and more fundamental than they had initially expected, and that it would take more time, energy and work to bridge them than perhaps they had anticipated or were willing to devote to the endeavor.

Maybe polite conversation by itself is not enough to bridge all our differences all the time, but it ought to be something we can all value as perhaps a first step, or at least a quality that every lady or gentleman should aspire to.

Also, we might find that on an individual level, specific differences with specific individuals may seem impossible to work out with the limited amount of time and energy we have, but we may take away from those attempts new perspectives that help us appreciate each other’s points of view, or gradually help ISKCON cohere on a larger level.

We have to keep trying. We have no alternative.

Comment posted by Akruranatha on March 27th, 2012

15Unregistered

Lots are being said about differences among the devotees that are often irreconcilable. Babhru Prabhu explored deeply on this issue in his article. However Krishnakirti Prabhu’s response and suggested solutions seems far-fetched, at least to me. Krishna consciousness is about devotees’s association. But of course such associations must be made with those who are like-minded. On that respect, commonwealth principles as suggested by Krishna Kirti Prabhu may be adopted. However that suggestion is not on the higher principles. A devotee on the second and third class platforms may be suited for that. However the topmost class of devotees, the *uttama bhaktas* see things differently. An *uttama* devotee sees the whole world as connected and serving Krishna. Thus they have no problem associating with anyone. The song to the six *goswamins* states that they were dear to the gentle and the ruffians. A devotee who has reached this level of advancement and has developed love of Krishna becomes dear to everyone. The whole world is his/her house. Srila Prabhupada came to build such house.

Being intolerant of other’s view and positions are all symptoms of all the materialistic tendencies among the devotees. It will be wonderful if devotees could just take a moment and reflect within themselves if their currently inclinations are pleasing to Srila Prabhupada, our founder-acarya. One of the qualities of a devotee is that he is a well-wisher of all. But how can one be a well-wisher when there is a consideration of what is pleasing to one’s self? Being well-wishing is based on the love principle. Well-wishing does not denote superiority over others. In the spiritual world, every devotee is a well-wisher to another devotee. Every devotee encourages other devotees to be more of servant of the Lord than

his/herself. Therefore the talks of commonwealth or separation among the devotees, in my opinion, really belong to kanistha category if not outright mayavada.

I think if devotees really becomes more internal and soul-search in terms of relationships among fellow devotees, most of the problems we are facing today in ISKCON can be minimized. As they say, "it has to be a spiritual solution." Not a material one. Srila Prabhupada said all these resolutions, revolutions, resolutions and ultimately no solutions will not help.

Comment posted by isvaradas on March 28th, 2012

16krishna-kirti

I want to thank everyone who has expressed their thoughts, appreciation, and reasoned objections to my piece. Thank you all.

If there is one and only one thing that I would like everyone to take away from this discussion, it is this: Within our society, the current direction of discourse surrounding difference guarantees separation. Schisms aren't bad things that happen only to other religious groups, and those who dissent from the status quo are not necessarily wrong in their position. Nor are they necessarily wrong to leave. The question then is not whether there will be separation but what kind of separation. Thus I suggested a "commonwealth" model of our society as a possible outcome. At this point, I don't think separation is avoidable. There may be some scope for influencing the separation, however.

Also, the burden of reaching out to others who dissent henceforward rests with devotees who belong to the present status quo. More and more, you will find that thoughtful devotees and their followers who also have some non-trivial difference with the mainstream will no longer be knocking on your doors. They have better things to do with their time than run pillar to post and risk Vaishnava aparadha just to be heard.

ys, KKD

Comment posted by krishna-kirti on March 28th, 2012

17Unregistered

Visakha Priya devi

"The outrageous "dialogue" on Dandavats, sparked by Urmila Devi's class in Mayapur last year, made me wonder how long we—the women who do not take their embodiment in women's bodies as the all-in-all—were going to be able to survive if the proponents of so-called Vedic culture (what they think it is) were going to continue flourishing without checks and balances from the highest authorities in our Society."

Very good side point. Indeed this society suffers from a big misconception of what truly is "Vedic" from a historical point of view. If devotees actually did their homework and did not blindly accept things on face value, there would be less disagreement of the facts.

For example, a good portion of devotees today still believe that a woman should have her head covered with almost every square inch of her body covered with cloth, especially in the presence of men. They believe that this practice is truly representative of "Vedic" culture when it is really the exact opposite. The sari, that we know of today, is a post Islamic form of dress that largely differs from the Vedic kayabandh, uttariya, antariya, etc... One will not find the term "sari" mentioned in sastra or see it in any pre-Islamic art, for the sari of today was specifically created to hide women's bodies due to Islamic and British societal codes. If one wishes to see how "Vedic" women dressed and were viewed in more Vedic times, one only needs to look at the artwork of the Ajanta Caves, or the temple sculptures at Khajuraho, Konark, etc... I bring this up as just one example of an ideology that can create much separation amongst devotees due to common misconceptions of straightforward facts. The main thing to remember is that Radha Krsna is in complete control of everyone and everything, at all times. Everyone is at their own level of spiritual realization and no one can check that of another to any degree. No one is without the highest guidance of Krsna at any time.

BG 18.61: The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.

Comment posted by bbd on March 28th, 2012

18Sita Rama 108

Mother Visahha Priya,

Please accept my humble obeisances.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

You are more experienced and wiser than I so you may accept this as good advice from a fool if it is good advice. You mentioned Mother Urmila's Lecture at Mayapura and the controversial discussion. I have a conviction related, in a broad way, to that, and the issue of different opinions in general. It seems to me empirical data on the ideas and positions of all the devotees, on a number of issues, is an essential tool for the leadership, and devotees in general, to get an accurate picture of mentality of the individuals this movement is comprised of. Without a quantitative analysis, I do not believe it is possible to get an accurate picture, even if one constantly travels to many ISKCON centers and hears lots of opinions. I can substantiate this but I will not do so right now.

I just did a quick count of the 417 comments on Mother Urmila's lecture and there were approximately 35 authors. It is highly questionable whether these are a representative sample of devotees. At any rate, it seemed like a matter of around a half dozen or less who were strongly opposed to Mother Urmila. I might do a detailed analysis of this but I am sure we cannot get an accurate picture of the level of controversy and the numbers of people with extreme views, as well as the number of moderates, simply from these comments. However, the human mind cannot tolerate uncertainty and we unconsciously believe we have a coherent picture of worldwide circumstance when it is not the fact. First we need a scientific understanding of the disagreements, the level of the disagreement, and the

multifaceted nature of various positions. Then we can seek creative solutions. Otherwise, to use a phrase coined by Hridayaanada Maharaja, we are basically just amateur social engineers.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on March 29th, 2012

19Unregistered

I heard Jayadvaita Swami mention a similar idea based on the model of Catholic religious orders like the Franciscans and Benedictines etc all under the umbrella of the Papal hierarchy. That way, Maharaja made the point that the different flavours and approach to Krsna consciousness could be similarly accommodated. I thought that might be something like the commonwealth ideal maybe.

Also I thought the previous comments about tolerance to be very important. I thought that if we ever start thinking our approach and understanding is supreme then we as conditioned souls might remember that we have a limited angle of vision and by definition always would fall short of a perfect holistic understanding. So, Only the Mahatmas can reconcile these differences purely.

Ysvt.

Comment posted by nrsingha8 on March 29th, 2012

20Puskaraksa das

Srila Prabhupada's standing instruction is: "if you love me, cooperate with each other!".

There is not much space open for speculation, beyond that...

So, if one is a genuine disciple or follower of Srila Prabhupada, one will feel duty bound and compelled to do so. Beyond, that will become the burden of love when, at times, it may become difficult to deal with the material ego of some of our still conditioned brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties, nephews and nieces, etc.

Nevertheless, we should all understand that we are a spiritual family, i.e. Srila Prabhupada' family!

So, there is no scope for schisms... Srila Prabhupada established ISKCON and the GBC Body, as its managerial authority. So, even if the GBC Body may, at times, make wrong decisions, we still have to be patient and tolerate, placing our faith in the fact that ISKCON is the main branch of the tree of Sri Krishna Caitanya, and that any mistake or deviation will be corrected, in due course of time, by the grace and mercy of Mahaprabhu and Srila Prabhupada...

In this way, we should practice "trinad api sunicena taror eva sahisnuna" and develop both humility and tolerance, in the line of our Vaishnava Acaryas. In that regard, please, kindly consider the example of Srila Haridas Thakur: He is Lord Brahma, the head of our Sampadaya! Yet, because of his birth, he was not allowed in the Sri Jagannatha Mandir. Did he revolt against what looked like a great injustice against the Nama Acarya? No, he tolerated with the utmost humily, being ready to offer all respect to others

without expecting anything in return... As a result, in such a frame of mind, he could chant the Holy Name constantly...

Similarly, the Pandavas had to go in exile for twelve years, after having been cheated at playing dice. Did this apparent injustice prompt them to lose faith in Krishna, as the Supreme Controller and the Supreme Protector?

Not to speak of Lord Ramacandra, Himself, Who had to go on exile, while Sita Devi's reputation was being damaged... !

Similarly, isn't Srimati Radharani accused of being "unchaste", when She actually is the epitome of chastity personified...?

So, our path is a path of tolerance and humility... Trinad api sunicena...

Besides, let us not lose sight of the ultimate goal of life, i.e. to develop pure love for God, which can be achieved, through our Parampara, only by pleasing Srila Prabhupada and receiving his mercy...

Hare Krishna

Das dasanudasa

Puskakaksa das

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on March 31st, 2012

21Puskaraksa das

Just a word, dear mother Visakha Priya, about this testimony of Jesus Christ, stating that "There are many mansions in my Father's kingdom..." .

Here Jesus refers to the different Vaikuntha planets, where the different Avatars of Lord Vishnu are being worshiped by devotees...

Beyond, there is also Dwarka and Mathura...

But there is only one Vrindavana... There is only one Srimati Radharani, one Lalita and one Visakha... And there is also only one HDG A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada engaged in their confidential service in his nitya lila...

So, this is "the narrow door... ". "Steep and difficult is the path leading to Goloka Vrindavana..."!

Nevertheless, we should not give it up for personal convenience...

As it is grihastas already have some sphere of independence. Gurus on their side, can fine tune temples or ashramas under their leadership, as per their particular mood... Temple devotees can also choose to serve in whatever temple they feel the most comfortable and the most welcome (unless ordered

differently by their guru), in the big ISKCON, this big house Srila Prabhupada built to host the whole world...

Hence, it is most important that we cooperate together, under the supervision of the GBC, within Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON.

Take good care

Hare Krishna

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on March 31st, 2012

22Akruranatha

When people quote Jesus Christ as saying, "There are many mansions in my Father's kingdom...", it pleases me to consider that Jesus may have been referring to Dwaraka Dhama, where there were something like 900,000 palaces.

I always say this with a half bemused smile, but the other half of me really seriously believes it. It may very well be that Jesus really said this and really had Lord Krishna's lustrous capitol in mind. Who can really say it isn't so?

Comment posted by Akruranatha on April 2nd, 2012

23Unregistered

Puskaraksa

"Srila Prabhupada's standing instruction is: "if you love me, cooperate with each other!". There is not much space open for speculation, beyond that..."

Hmm...I was never under the impression that Srila Prabhupada's main concern was receiving love from those interested in Krsna Consciousness. I thought Srila Prabhupada's standing instruction was more like "learn to love Krsna". But maybe that's the speculation you say there is no room for.

"So, if one is a genuine disciple or follower of Srila Prabhupada, one will feel duty bound and compelled to do so. Beyond, that will become the burden of love when, at times, it may become difficult to deal with the material ego of some of our still conditioned brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties, nephews and nieces, etc."

Is this the new "burden of love" sutra? I always thought Gaudiya Vaisnavas are followers of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who freely gave His love. I'm sure Mahaprabhu was not leaving a burden for others to carry. That's not Gaudiya siddhanta.

"Nevertheless, we should all understand that we are a spiritual family, i.e. Srila Prabhupada' family!"

"So, there is no scope for schisms..."

But you have just set the stage for schism. This seems like a very sectarian vision. Srila Prabhupada was Krsna's instrument for large scale spreading of Vaisnavism throughout the world. Prabhupada established the International Society for Krsna Consciousness. He did not establish the International Society for Prabhupada Consciousness. This idea of "Prabhupada's family" that you promote is a large reason why many have felt alienated and no longer participate in a mood of cooperation. This is because it has become a 'take it or leave it' ideology based on love for Prabhupada (as you've previously stated) rather than love for Radha Krsna. It seems most, if not all, interested in Vaisnava siddhanta at least have utmost respect and appreciation for Srila Prabhupada, if not sentiment feelings of love. However, many do not share the "burden of love" philosophy you are promoting here.

Comment posted by bbd on April 2nd, 2012

24Unregistered

"Besides, let us not loose sight of the ultimate goal of life, i.e. to develop pure love God, which can be achieved, through our Parampara, only by pleasing Srila Prabhupada and receiving his mercy..."

More sectarian philosophy it seems. Sastra teaches that the goal of life is to become self realized and then become more and more intimate in our relationship with Radha Krsna until we are ready to physically live with God for eternity. Your statement would be more universally acceptable (and lack schism) if it was more focused on receiving Krsna's mercy. Prabhupada is not an independent agent...no one is but God. Krsna has unlimited ways to bestow mercy to anyone, through anyone, or anything. Krsna is omnipresent and omnipotent.

SB 11.13.24: Within this world, whatever is perceived by the mind, speech, eyes or other senses is Me alone and nothing besides Me. All of you please understand this by a straightforward analysis of the facts.

Comment posted by bbd on April 2nd, 2012

25Unregistered

Dear Devotees

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

I wish to respond to bbd Prabhu's comment #24. I have been following this discussion and would like to make few points.

I am a very junior devotee - not even initiated yet - still, somehow I feel compelled to respond. Begging forgiveness of all devotees if any of my comments offend you in any way.

1. Personally I felt the tone of bbd Prabhu's comments #23 & 24 to be unnecessarily aggressive without sufficient cause. This surprised me since I did not see what was so offensive in HG Puskaraksa Prabhu's remarks being commented upon.

2. Furthermore, I find it hard to digest what bbd Prabhu says in #24 - specifically since the idea of receiving Srila Prabhupada's mercy is being refuted / countered with the argument that it is more important to receive Lord Krsna's mercy.

My understanding has always been that it is by the grace of Krsna that one comes in contact with Sri Guru. Then, ONLY by the grace of Guru one gets Krsna. So, if we are really to develop (and increase) our love for Sri Sri Radha Krsna - we must please Srila Prabhupada. There is no other way.

I have heard Srila Prabhupada say in some lectures that a devotee is more merciful than Krsna. Lord Krsna says in BG 18.67 :

"This confidential knowledge may never be explained to those who are not austere, or devoted, or engaged in devotional service, nor to one who is envious of Me."

Srila Prabhupada refers to this verse in his lecture/s and clarifies that even in the light of above instruction, the devotee tries to preach to these classes of people - because he understands the purpose of the Supreme Lord.

Your humble servant

Sanjay

Comment posted by servantoftheservant on April 2nd, 2012

26Unregistered

In Raga Vartma Chandrika of Visvanath Chakravarti Thakura:

When the eye is smeared with medicinal ointment, it's ability of reception becomes more and more refined, and accordingly it is able to perceive more and more subtle objects; similarly according to the degree of the mind's having become purified by hearing and chanting of My purifying pastimes, all the subtle truths of reality become manifest in the heart of the sadhaka.

Uddhava says in Srimad Bhagavatam 11.29.6: Krishna reveals Himself through the acarya or through the agency of the caitya guru. Thus some devotee attains knowledge about the moods of Krishna and His Vraja associates from the mouth of a guru, some from the mouth of a learned raganuga devotee, and some, whose hearts have been purified by the practice of devotional service, will have this knowledge directly revealed to them from within their hearts.

You said, "I have heard Srila Prabhupada say in some lectures that a devotee is more merciful than Krsna. Lord Krsna says in BG 18.67 :

"This confidential knowledge may never be explained to those who are not austere, or devoted, or engaged in devotional service, nor to one who is envious of Me."

Srila Prabhupada refers to this verse in his lecture/s and clarifies that even in the light of above instruction, the devotee tries to preach to these classes of people - because he understands the purpose of the Supreme Lord.”

I’m not sure what this has to do with said discussion, esp. BG 18.67. Building up to BG 18.66, Krsna just finished summarizing His complete control over everyone and everything and is now advising Arjuna to give up his perception of control over reality. He is giving Arjuna the ultimate recipe for attaining self realization = to surrender to Krsna’s complete control and become situated in self realization to where there is no fear or anxiety = Vaikuntha. Then, in BG 18.67 Krsna is basically telling Arjuna not to freely give this revelation to just anyone because everyone is on their own level and path of spiritual evolution and may not be ready to accept Krsna complete control. This is because truly accepting Krsna’s complete control over everything and everyone we experience may not be a comfortable truth unless one is ready to receive that revelation.

Comment posted by bbd on April 3rd, 2012

27Unregistered

With reference to the boys holding kirtanas independently, our propaganda should be like that. That people may open different centers of their own, or each and every householder may have his own class at home. Not that everyone is required to join the society; they may take the idea from the society and introduce in their private life.

VedaBase => Letter to: Rayarama — Unknown Place Unknown Date.

Comment posted by nrsingha8 on April 4th, 2012

28Sita Rama 108

BBd Prabhu,

You say”Hmm...I was never under the impression that Srila Prabhupada’s main concern was receiving love from those interested in Krsna Consciousness. I thought Srila Prabhupada’s standing instruction was more like “learn to love Krsna”. But maybe that’s the speculation you say there is no room for”.

There is no principal higher than accepting the burden of service to please the Acarya.

It seems hard to deny that some have adopted a “take it or leave it” philosophy and have tried to justified this by saying we all have to cooperate with ISKCON authorities, per Srila Prabhupada’s instruction. However, there are many examples of Srila Prabhupada blaming the leaders for creating situations that devotees were unwilling to cooperate with. It is a two way street. So the, “take it or leave it”, attitude is basically politics. Mixing politics with high spiritual principals is a horrible injustice because people may reject the high principal along with the injustice. Please do not allow the mistakes of others to cause you to reject the most important aspect of devotional service.

Purport to SB 7: 9: 28 “ Therefore Prahlāda Mahārāja proposed that he engage in the service of Nārada Muni. He never proposed that he engage directly in the service of the Lord. This is the right conclusion. Therefore he said, so ‘haà kathaà nu visåje tava bhātya-sevām: “How can I give up the service of my spiritual master, who has favored me in such a way that I am now able to see You face to face?” Prahlāda Mahārāja prayed to the Lord that he might continue to engage in the service of his spiritual master, Nārada Muni.”

You are correct that Srila Prabhupada’s main concern was that we love Krishna. All of Srila Prabhupada’s instructions regarding honoring and obeying the Spiritual Master were motivated by this desire, not by a desire to be pleased personally. It just so happens, as is song daily in all ISKCON Temples, without pleasing the Spiritual Master one cannot please Krishna.

You may argue that splinter groups are the best solution and I may argue against it. That MAY be a relative. But the principal of first pleasing the Acraya is absolute.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 6th, 2012

29Unregistered

Sita Rama 108

“There is no principal higher than accepting the burden of service to please the Acarya.”

That is not the conclusion or highest principle explained in sastra. The highest principle is to always remember Krsna.

CC Madhya 22.113: Krishna is the origin of Lord Vishnu. He should always be remembered and never forgotten at any time. All the rules and prohibitions mentioned in the sastras should be the servants of these two principles.

“You may argue that splinter groups are the best solution and I may argue against it. That MAY be a relative.”

I am not arguing the superiority of any organized group.

“But the principal of first pleasing the Acraya is absolute.”

This statement you made is not absolute truth. I am not disagreeing that this may be a relative truth for many, however it is not an absolute truth for everyone. The absolute truth is that Krsna is guru, controlling everyone and everything, at all times, in everything everyone experiences. That is the conclusion of sastra. That is the revealed truth for attaining self realization. No acharya or person is ever independent of Krsna. Rather, paramatma is the real guru directing everyone and everything in every minute detail, hence giving experiences and teachings to all living entities at all times. Radha Krsna can reveal knowledge to anyone, at anytime, through any medium He/She arranges. That is the absolute truth free from any sectarian ideologies.

SB 11.7.17: My dear Lord, You are the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and You reveal Yourself to Your devotees. Besides Your Lordship, I do not see anyone who can actually explain perfect knowledge to me. Such a perfect teacher is not to be found even among the demigods in heaven. Indeed, all of the demigods, headed by Lord Brahmā, are bewildered by Your illusory potency. They are conditioned souls who accept their own material bodies and bodily expansions to be the highest truth.

SB 11.7.18: Therefore, O Lord, feeling weary of material life and tormented by its distresses, I now surrender unto You because You are the perfect master. You are the unlimited, all-knowing Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose spiritual abode in Vaikuṅṭha is free from all disturbances. In fact, You are known as Nārāyaṇa, the true friend of all living beings.

Comment posted by bbd on April 8th, 2012

30Unregistered

SB 11.7.19: The Supreme Lord replied: Generally those human beings who can expertly analyze the actual situation of the material world are able to raise themselves beyond the inauspicious life of gross material gratification.

SB 11.7.20: An intelligent person, expert in perceiving the world around him and in applying sound logic, can achieve real benefit through his own intelligence. Thus sometimes one acts as one's own instructing spiritual master.

SB 11.7.21: In the human form of life, those who are self-controlled and expert in the spiritual science of Sāṅkhya can directly see Me along with all of My potencies.

SB 11.7.22: In this world there are many kinds of created bodies — some with one leg, others with two, three, four or more legs, and still others with no legs — but of all these, the human form is actually dear to Me.

SB 11.7.23: Although I, the Supreme Lord, can never be captured by ordinary sense perception, those situated in human life may use their intelligence and other faculties of perception to directly search for Me through both apparent and indirectly ascertained symptoms.

SB 11.7.24: In this regard, sages cite a historical narration concerning the conversation between the greatly powerful King Yadu and an avadhūta.

SB 11.7.25: Mahārāja Yadu once observed a certain brāhmaṇa avadhūta, who appeared to be quite young and learned, wandering about fearlessly. Being himself most learned in spiritual science, the King took the opportunity and inquired from him as follows.

SB 11.7.26: Śrī Yadu said: O brāhmaṇa, I see that you are not engaged in any practical religious activity, and yet you have acquired a most expert understanding of all things and all people within this world.

Kindly tell me, sir, how did you acquire this extraordinary intelligence, and why are you traveling freely throughout the world behaving as if you were a child?

SB 11.7.31: Lord Kṛṣṇa continued: The intelligent King Yadu, always respectful to the brāhmaṇas, waited with bowed head as the brāhmaṇa, pleased with the King's attitude, began to reply.

SB 11.7.32: The brāhmaṇa said: My dear King, with my intelligence I have taken shelter of many spiritual masters. Having gained transcendental understanding from them, I now wander about the earth in a liberated condition. Please listen as I describe them to you.

Comment posted by bbd on April 8th, 2012

31Unregistered

SB 11.7.33-35: O King, I have taken shelter of twenty-four gurus, who are the following: the earth, air, sky, water, fire, moon, sun, pigeon and python; the sea, moth, honeybee, elephant and honey thief; the deer, the fish, the prostitute Piṅgalā, the kurara bird and the child; and the young girl, arrow maker, serpent, spider and wasp. My dear King, by studying their activities I have learned the science of the self.

SB 11.7.36: Please listen, O son of Mahārāja Yayāti, O tiger among men, as I explain to you what I have learned from each of these gurus.

SB 11.7.37: A sober person, even when harassed by other living beings, should understand that his aggressors are acting helplessly under the control of God, and thus he should never be distracted from progress on his own path. This rule I have learned from the earth.

SB 11.9.23: O King, once a wasp forced a weaker insect to enter his hive and kept him trapped there. In great fear the weak insect constantly meditated upon his captor, and without giving up his body, he gradually achieved the same state of existence as the wasp. Thus one achieves a state of existence according to one's constant concentration.

SB 11.9.24: O King, from all these spiritual masters I have acquired great wisdom. Now please listen as I explain what I learned from my own body.

SB 11.9.25: The material body is also my spiritual master because it teaches me detachment. Being subject to creation and destruction, it always comes to a painful end. Thus, although using my body to acquire knowledge, I always remember that it will ultimately be consumed by others, and remaining detached, I move about this world.

SB 11.9.30: Having learned from my spiritual masters, I remain situated in realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and, fully renounced and enlightened by realized spiritual knowledge, wander the earth without attachment or false ego.

SB 11.9.31: Although the Absolute Truth is one without a second, the sages have described Him in many different ways. Therefore one may not be able to acquire very firm or complete knowledge from one spiritual master.

SB 11.13.24: Within this world, whatever is perceived by the mind, speech, eyes or other senses is Me alone and nothing besides Me. All of you please understand this by a straightforward analysis of the facts.

BG 6.30: For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me.

Comment posted by bbd on April 8th, 2012

32Sita Rama 108

bbd Prabhu

You have cited SB 11.9.31:

Although the Absolute Truth is one without a second, the sages have described Him in many different ways. Therefore one may not be able to acquire very firm or complete knowledge from one spiritual master.

Please consider the statements below, which are found in the purport to this verse:

Çréla Çrédhara Svämé comments on this verse as follows. “The statement that one requires many spiritual masters certainly needs explanation, since practically all great saintly persons of the past did not take shelter of many spiritual masters, but rather accepted one.”

Çréla Viçvanätha Cakravarté Öhäkura also comments on this verse, as follows. “It is stated in Çrémad-Bhägavatam, tasmäd guruà prapadyeta jijñäsuù çreya uttamam: [SB 11.3.21] ‘Therefore one should approach a bona fide spiritual master if one actually desires to achieve the highest perfection in life.’ Similarly, in Chapter Ten, verse 5 of this canto, the Personality of Godhead Himself states, mad-abhijñä guruà çäntam upäséta mad-ätmakam: ‘One must serve a bona fide spiritual master who is in full knowledge of My personality and who is not different from Me.’ There are many similar verses in Vedic literature indicating that one must take shelter of a single bona fide spiritual master. We also have the examples of innumerable great saintly persons who did not accept more than one spiritual master. Thus, it is a fact that we should accept one bona fide spiritual master and receive from him the particular mantra that one is to chant. I myself certainly follow this principle and worship my bona fide spiritual master. However, in worshipping one’s äcärya, one may take help from good and bad examples. By observing examples of good behavior one will be strengthened in devotional service, and in seeing negative examples one will be forewarned and avoid danger. In this way, one may accept many ordinary material objects as one’s spiritual masters, considering them as çikñä-gurus, or gurus who give important lessons for spiritual advancement.”

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 8th, 2012

33Sita Rama 108

bbd Prabhu,

You are free to follow any idea you like, but in our disciplic succession, although the principal of always remembering Krishna is topmost; there is nothing higher than the mood of Srimati Radharani expressed by Lord Catianya.

Cc. Madhya 13.80

I am not a brähmaëa, I am not a kñatriya, I am not a vaiçya or a çüdra. Nor am I a brahmacäre, a householder, a vänaprastha or a sannyäsé. I identify Myself only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Çré Kåñëa, the maintainer of the gopés. He is like an ocean of nectar, and He is the cause of universal transcendental bliss. He is always existing with

Morning Walk, December 5, 1973, Los Angeles

Yaçomaténandana: Spiritual master gives knowledge, and then a disciple is eternally indebted to spiritual master.

Prabhupäda: Yes.

Yaçomaténandana: It is not that, like Mäyävädés, they serve the spiritual master in the beginning and then they...

Prabhupäda: Then they...

Yaçomaténandana: ...themselves become...

Prabhupäda: ...throw him away, "Go away. I have now learned." Guru-mara-vidyā, to, the knowledge of how to kill guru. Guru-mara-vidyā. Their, the philosophy is that you cannot rise up. You take a ladder. But as soon as you rise, throw away the ladder. No more. No more needed. That is Mäyävāda philosophy. Our philosophy is dhyāyan stuvaàs tasya yaças tri-sandhyam.

Yaçomaténandana: Three...

Prabhupäda: Eternally.

yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo

yasyāprasādān na gatiù kuto 'p

By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Kåñëa. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement.

Ideally the example of Srila Prabhupada makes a devotee ecstatic and desirous of serving his lotus feet. If someone doesn't feel that way they will probably not be convinced by the conclusion of the shastra. But the conclusion of the shastra cannot be compromised; therefore I have to say your statements are wrong.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 8th, 2012

34Puskaraksa das

Sri Guru carane rati, ei se uttama gati...

Yasya prasādād Bhagavat-prasādo

Yasya aprasādān na gatih kuto pi...

From this one can understand that it is not, as bb das did put it, that “Srila Prabhupada’s main concern was not, receiving love from those interested in Krishna consciousness”!

First of all, without Srila Prabhupada’s coming to the West and presenting Bhagavad-gita as it is, there would have been hardly anybody “interested in Krishna consciousness”. So, it is here a matter of elementary gratefulness, if nothing else! So, let us not become ungrateful and forget how most of us, if not all, have come to Krishna consciousness, thanks to Srila Prabhupada kripa, first and second generation of devotees included, not to speak of future generation...

Rather, by the mercy of Krishna, one gets a bona fide spiritual master, and by the mercy of that sat guru, one can get Krishna, provided one gets the mercy of that pure devotee, that tattva darshi, he who sees Krishna...

Hence, attachment to his lotus is the ultimate goal. As we do not know Krishna, and haven’t had the darshan of Krishna yet, the bona fide Spiritual Master is the via media by which Krishna will teach us and guide us...

Jive saksat nahi, tate guru caitya-rupe

Siksa-Guru haya Krishna mahanta-svarupe

Since one cannot see the Supersoull directly, Krishna appears as a liberated devotee. Such a Siksa Guru is none other than Krishna Himself. C.c. Adi 1.58

Siksa-Guruke ta’jani Krishnera svarupa

Antaryami, bhakta-srestha, ei dui rupa

One should know the Siksa Guru to be Krishna Himself. As Guru, Krishna has two forms as the Supersoul and as the best of devotees. C.c. Adi 1.47

Moreover,

Guru-Krishna-rupa hana sastrera pramane

Guru-rupe Krishna kripa karena bhakta-gane

“According to sastra, the Guru is non-different from Krishna, because it is through the Guru that Krishna bestows mercy on His devotees.”. C.c. Adi 1.45

Therefore to deny Guru tattva and pretend one can go directly to Krishna, only thanks to the guidance of the Supersoul, and develop prema bhakti without the mercy a pure devotee, who is the bona fide representative of Krishna is not only dangerous for one's spiritual life, but also dangerous for others, as it may mislead them...

Acaryavan Puruso Veda

Only one who has a guru can know the Truth.

Chandogya Upanishad 6.14.2

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on April 9th, 2012

35Puskaraksa das

Tat vijnanartham sa Gurum evabhigacchet

Samit panih srotiyam Brahma-nistham

One who wants to know the Absolute Truth scientifically must approach a bona fide Spiritual Master and offer Him everything required for sacrifice. Such a Spiritual Master must be fixed in the Truth, having heard it in disciplic succession. Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12

Yasya deve para bhaktir yatha deve tatha Gurau

Tasyaite kathita hy arthah prakasante mahatmanah

Only unto those great souls who serve Guru and Krishna with implicit faith is the import of the Vedas fully revealed. Svetasvatara Upanishad 6.23

However,

Sravanayapi bahubhir yo na labhyah

Srinvento 'pi bahavo na vidyuh

Ascaryo 'sya vakta kus lo 'sya labhda

Ascaryo jnata kusalanusistah

Many cannot hear about the soul, and even after hearing about it, many cannot understand it, because it is hard to find a Guru who is a genuine seer of the Truth. Such a qualified Guru is a great soul and is very rare. Only those who follow his teachings can realize the Truth and become expert in the science of God. Such disciples are also very rare. Katha Upanishad 1.2.7

Das dasanudasa

Puskaraksa das

Comment posted by Puskaraksa das on April 9th, 2012

36Unregistered

ātmano gurur ātmaiva

puruṣasya viśeṣataḥ

yat pratyakṣānumānābhyāṁ

śreyo'sāv anuvindate

The Self is spiritual guide to the self, especially for human beings who through direct experience and inference are able to establish what is truly good for themselves. (11.7.20)

In his commentary, Srila Jiva Goswami specifies, however, that this intelligence arising from within also inspires us to find and follow a spiritual master without (gurv-anusaraṇe pravartaka ity arthaḥ). This is also stated by Krishnadas:

jīve sāksāt nāhi tāte guru caitya-rūpe

śikṣā-guru haya kṛṣṇa mahānta-svarūpe

Since one cannot directly experience the guru as the intelligence within, Krishna appears as the siksha guru in the form of a highly advanced devotee. (CC 1.1.58)

Saraswati Thakur also explains here in his Vivṛti, “The non-self can never cause anything untoward or inauspicious to happen to someone situated in knowledge of his true nature. Thus someone situated in such knowledge does not get entangled in the perception of the non-self, but rather sees the presence of the Supreme Self (Paramatma) as guru in those things. Such a person is liberated and is truly capable of using the faculties of direct perception (pratyakṣa) and inference (anumāna).”

Krishna goes on to say that those who possess self-discipline seek him out, the Supreme Lord, by using their faculty of reason; and even though he is beyond the material nature, they are able to know him as the cause of all causes. Of course, Vishwanath points out the limits of reason—though one may be able to come to some understanding of the Brahman and Paramatman features of the Lord, Krishna as the Supreme Person is certainly beyond the scope of inference alone.

Comment posted by nrsingha8 on April 9th, 2012

37Unregistered

By the Grace of the Acharya and Spiritual Master one can always remember Krsna.Saksad Hari.

yasya prasadaḥ bhagavat-prasado

yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi

dhyayan stuvams tasya yasas tri-sandhyam

vande guroh sri-caranaravindam

By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Krishna. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement. Therefore, I should always remember and praise the spiritual master. At least three times a day I should offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master.

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Sri Caitanya Caritamrita Adi 1.46

acaryam mam vijaniyan

navamanyeta karhicit

na martya-buddhyasuyeta

sarva-deva-mayo guroh

SYNONYMS

TRANSLATION

“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.”

PURPORT

...

Only out of His immense compassion does the Personality of Godhead reveal Himself as the spiritual master. Therefore in the dealings of an acarya there are no activities but those of transcendental loving service to the Lord. He is the Supreme Personality of Servitor Godhead. It is worthwhile to take shelter of such a steady devotee, who is called asraya-vigraha, or the manifestation or form of the Lord of whom one must take shelter.

If one poses himself as an acarya but does not have an attitude of servitorship to the Lord, he must be considered an offender, and this offensive attitude disqualifies him from being an acarya. The bona fide spiritual master always engages in unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By this test he is known to be a direct manifestation of the Lord and a genuine representative of Sri Nityananda Prabhu. Such a spiritual master is known as acaryadeva. Influenced by an envious temperament and dissatisfied because of an attitude of sense gratification, mundaners criticize a real acarya. In fact, however, a bona fide acarya is nondifferent from the Personality of Godhead, and therefore to envy such an acarya is to envy the Personality of Godhead Himself. This will produce an effect subversive of transcendental realisation.”

Comment posted by nrsingha8 on April 9th, 2012

38Unregistered

Srila Prabhupada lecture on the Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.6.8 in Vrndavana India on November 30, 1976

So just like ordinary cloud is made possible by evaporating water from the sea, similarly, Krsna has the sea of mercy, karunayamaya, karuna-sagara. Krsna's another name is Karuna-sagara. So as the air evaporate or the heat evaporate from the sea, and the cloud is formed in the sky, similarly, one who has connection or the power to evaporate the mercy sea of Krsna, he can extinguish the samsara davanala. And that is guru. Guru is the cloud or he is the agent of drying water from the ocean of mercy of Krsna and turn it into a mercy cloud and pour water on the samsara davanala, and then it is extinguished. Samsara davanala-lidha-loka-tranaya karunya-ghanaghanatvam, praptasya kalyana.

Therefore guru must be authorized person, not that bhumi-phala-guru(?). No. "I am guru," no. You cannot become guru unless you are agent to draw out the mercy water from the ocean of mercy of Krsna. That is guru. And therefore a guru is not an ordinary person....You cannot get Krsna by studying Vedas. That is not possible. There is Krsna in the Vedas, but you cannot pick up. It is not possible. But if you go to the Krsna's favorite person... Kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya. Krsna's very dear servant, confidential servant, is guru. Nobody can become guru unless he is in confidence of Krsna....We have to see whether a person is actually bona fide agent of Krsna. Then we accept him as guru. Otherwise useless waste of time. Gurur apy avaliptasya karyakaryam ajanatah. Guru is very confidential serv... Saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastrair uktas tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih. Guru is saksad hari; there is no distinction between guru and Krsna.... Whether you are actually in terms of the sastra? Whether actually you are dear to Krsna, you are most confidential servant? That we have to test... So if this confidential knowledge, one who preaches without any compromise, he is the confidential servant of Krsna. There is no compromise. This is real religion. The Krsna says, na ca tasmad manusyesu kascid me priya-krttamah. So this is the person who has received the authority to draw mercy water from the ocean of mercy of Krsna. Saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastraih."

Comment posted by nrsingha8 on April 9th, 2012

39Unregistered

Sita Rama 108, nrsingha8, & Puskaraksa

Someone said, "Therefore to deny Guru tattva and pretend one can go directly to Krishna, only thanks to the guidance of the Supersoul, and develop prema bhakti without the mercy a pure devotee, who is the bona fide representative of Krishna is not only dangerous for one's spiritual life, but also dangerous for others, as it may mislead them..."

SB 3.29.20: As the chariot of air carries an aroma from its source and immediately catches the sense of smell, similarly, one who constantly engages in devotional service, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, can catch the Supreme Soul, who is equally present everywhere.

SB 3.29.21: I am present in every living entity as the Supersoul. If someone neglects or disregards that Supersoul everywhere and engages himself in the worship of the Deity in the temple, that is simply imitation.

SB 3.29.22: One who worships the Deity of Godhead in the temples but does not know that the Supreme Lord, as Paramātmā, is situated in every living entity's heart, must be in ignorance and is compared to one who offers oblations into ashes.

SB 11.2.41: A devotee should not see anything as being separate from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. Ether, fire, air, water, earth, the sun and other luminaries, all living beings, the directions, trees and other plants, the rivers and oceans — whatever a devotee experiences he should consider to be an expansion of Kṛṣṇa. Thus seeing everything that exists within creation as the body of the Supreme Lord, Hari, the devotee should offer his sincere respects to the entire expansion of the Lord's body.

I guess I don't see what all the fuss is about. No one is denying that "the person Bhagavata is just as good as the book Bhagavata". No one is denying the need for siksā, especially the neophyte. However, I am not advocating that "no one goes to the Father accept through me" philosophy either. I guess I am still unclear on the disagreement. Do you disagree with the fact that Radha Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller of everyone and everything in existence? Do you disagree with the fact that Radha Kṛṣṇa is the only and original guru (one without a second)? Do you disagree with the fact that paramatma (Radha Kṛṣṇa) is giving everyone the highest guidance from within?

Comment posted by bbd on April 10th, 2012

40Unregistered

BG 3.27: The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature.

BG 13.30: One who can see that all activities are performed by the body, which is created of material nature, and sees that the self does nothing, actually sees.

BG 15.15: I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness.

BG 18.60: Under illusion you are now declining to act according to My direction. But, compelled by the work born of your own nature, you will act all the same, O son of Kuntī.

BG 18.61: The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.

From The Harmonist, May 1932, issue number 11.

Article originally titled, Sree Chaitanya in South India. Pages 325-326.

By Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur

“The world stands in no need of any reformer. The world has a very competent person for guiding its minutest happenings. The person who determines that there is scope for reform of the world, himself stands in need of reform. The world goes on in its own perfect way. No person can deflect it even the breadth of a hair from the course chalked out for it by providence. When we perceive any change being actually effected in the course of events of this world by the agency of any particular individual, we must know very well that the agent possesses no real power at any stage. The agent finds himself driven forward by a force belonging to a different category from himself. The course of the world does not require to be changed by the agency of any person. What is necessary is to change our outlook on this world. This was done for the contemporary generation by the mercy of Sri Chaitanya. It can only be known to recipients of his mercy. The scriptures declare that it is only necessary to listen with an open mind to the name of Krishna from the lips of a bona fide devotee. As soon as Krishna enters the listening ear, he clears up the vision of the listener so that he no longer has any ambition of ever acting the part of a reformer of any other person, because he finds that nobody is left without the very highest guidance. It is therefore his own reform, by the grace of God, whose supreme necessity and nature he is increasingly able to realize, by the eternally continuing mercy of the Supreme Lord.”

Comment posted by bbd on April 10th, 2012

41Unregistered

I have never “become ungrateful and forget how most of us, if not all, have come to Krishna consciousness, thanks to Srila Prabhupada kripa, first and second generation of devotees included, not to speak of future generation...” Rather, I see Prabhupada as Krsna’s instrument for bringing vaidhi-bhakti to more people in a short amount of time than ever before. I have never cooperatively served under any institution other than ISKCON (diska, siksa, the whole nine yards, etc...). However, I do not accept a “cookie cutter”, “one size fits all”, “take it or leave it” approach to spiritual life. That approach is not recommended in shastra for all, nor do I see it as a healthy and sustainable approach. I do not agree that one must accept a “There is no principal higher than accepting the burden of service to please the Acarya” philosophy. That is not the absolute conclusion of shastra. Shastra contains many prescriptions for various kinds of bhaktas on various levels of spiritual consciousness. There are prescriptions for neophytes, and for the more advanced. There are prescriptions for vaidhi bhaktas, and there practically no prescriptions for raganuga bhaktas, etc... However, sravanam and kirtanam are the fundamentals for all bhaktas.

Also, I do not see any jiva’s words and instructions as the “end point” to all conclusions of Vaisnava siddhanta, as others may suggest. Maybe this is the core point of disagreement, . However, that may not be the solution for widespread cooperation amongst Gaudiyas, and would go against the very principle of liberty that the Thakur promotes.

Comment posted by bbd on April 10th, 2012

42Sita Rama 108

SB 11.9 31:Although the Absolute Truth is one without a second, the sages have described Him in many different ways. Therefore one may not be able to acquire very firm or complete knowledge from one spiritual master.

PURPORT

Çréla Çrédhara Svämé comments on this verse as follows. “The statement that one requires many spiritual masters certainly needs explanation, since practically all great saintly persons of the past did not take shelter of many spiritual masters, but rather accepted one. The words géyate bahudharñibhiù, ‘the Absolute Truth is glorified in many ways by the sages,’ indicate the personal and impersonal understandings of the Absolute Truth. In other words, some sages describe only the Lord’s impersonal effulgence, which is without spiritual variety, whereas others describe the Lord’s manifest form as the Personality of Godhead. Thus, merely by hearing from many different authorities, one cannot actually learn the highest perfection of life. The proliferation of differing spiritual authorities is useful only to counteract the living entities’ tendency to be grossly materialistic. Different spiritual philosophers create faith in the existence of the soul and may be accepted at that level. But as will be clarified in later verses, the spiritual master who ultimately gives perfect knowledge is one.”

The entire paragraph above is in quotation marks and attributed to Çréla Çrédhara Svämé. The Acarya acknowledges that a spiritual seeker can understand the soul though an eclectic type process. We do not say everyone has to accept Srila Prabhupada as the, “one ultimate Guru”. We do not say that ISKCON is the only possible way to approach God. But members of ISKCON are enlightened by the grace of Srila Prabhupada; they are inspired by the example of Srila Prabhupada and want to serve his movement. They accept him as THEIR ultimate authority based on the fact that his preaching resulted in their coming in contact with a clearly understandable and transparent explanation of the Infallible Absolute Truth of the Veda. A person may not share that conviction, but any honest person will admit that exclusive devotion to Srila Prabhupada is warranted because it is grounded in common gratitude, philosophical conviction, and is in accordance with instructions from revealed scripture.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 10th, 2012

43Sita Rama 108

bbd,

You say, “I do not agree that one must accept a “There is no principal higher than accepting the burden of service to please the Acarya” philosophy”. Everyone has the right to their own beliefs but not their own facts. You can believe it or not, but based on the facts, it is absurd to deny that this is the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness. Every morning in ISKCON this is sung:

The spiritual master is to be honored as much as the Supreme Lord, because he is the most confidential servitor of the Lord. This is acknowledged in all revealed scriptures and followed by all authorities. Therefore I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is a bona fide representative of Çré Hari [Kâñëa].

That is ALL revealed scriptures and ALL authorities. This claim is easily verified; the principal is unambiguously described by virtually every authority within the Bhagavatam including Krishna Himself. Here is an example from "Krishna Book" Chapter 80, by none other than Krishna's Guru. Krishna said: "With great compassion our gurudeva said, "My dear boys, it is very wonderful that you have suffered so much trouble for me. Everyone likes to take care of his body as the first consideration, but you are so good and faithful to your guru that without caring for bodily comforts you have taken so much trouble for me. I am glad to see that bona fide students like you will undergo any kind of trouble for the satisfaction of the spiritual master. That is the way for a bona fide disciple to become free from his debt to the spiritual master. It is the duty of the disciple to dedicate his life to the service of the spiritual master

In fact the entire prayer of Mangala Araitik and Guru Puja is consistent with the philosophy that there is no higher principal than accepting the burden of service to please the Acarya. These prayers are those of past Acarya's, and Srila Prabhupada established that they will be sung daily in ISKCON. It is not a policy or principal devised by the fallible GBC. You can argue with GBC resolutions but you can't disagree with the unanimous conclusion of ALL scriptures and ALL spiritual authorities.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 10th, 2012

44Unregistered

The Lord exhibits his mercy through the agency of his pure bhakta. And so it is said the Kripa of the Lord's confidant is even greater than the Lord himself. Such a Vaisnava is considered All-Powerful!

<http://www.krishna.com/vaishnava-all-powerful>

"Bhattacharya offered him his due respect and replied, "My dear Gopinatha Acarya, it is through your mercy that I have received the mercy of the Supreme Lord." THE MERCY OF THE SUPREME PERSONALITY OF GODHEAD CAN BE OBTAINED BY THE MERCY OF A PURE DEVOTEE. Lord Caitanya's mercy was bestowed upon Bhattacharya because of Gopinatha Acarya's endeavour. 'You are a great devotee of the Lord,' Bhattacharya continued, 'and I was simply blinded by my academic education. Yes, I have obtained the mercy of the Lord through your agency only.' Lord Caitanya Himself was greatly pleased to hear Bhattacharya say that a man can obtain the mercy of the Lord through the agency of a devotee. He appreciated his words and embraced Bhattacharya, confirming his statement." (TLC 26)

Comment posted by nrsingha8 on April 11th, 2012

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...one cannot associate with Krsna unless he has fully received the favor of the inhabitants of Vrajabhumi. Therefore if one wants to be delivered by Krsna directly, he must take to the service of the residents of Vrndavana, who are unalloyed devotees of the Lord.

>>> Ref. VedaBase => SB 5.18.23

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Comment posted by nrsingha8 on April 16th, 2012