

NARADA PRIYA MATAJI

My Brief Against Feminism

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By Narada Priya devi dasi

The question about whether women should become initiating spiritual masters or not has been raised. Some speculate about what to call her– “Maharani”, instead of “Maharaja”? “Jaya Guru devi”, instead of “Jaya Gurudeva”? Hearing all this, I am thinking, “Why change anything? Didn’t Srila Prabhupada say not to introduce anything ‘new’? Prabhupada didn’t make women sannyasis while on the planet, so why should he favor female diksha guruship?”

PRABHUPADA MADE DISTINCTIONS

Some female Prabhupada disciples argue that he did not discriminate what kind of services they could render as women. On the contrary, Prabhupada did make distinctions, as evidenced by his letters. An example is Yamuna devi. She was doing huge preaching work, but after leaving her husband, Prabhupada wrote to her the following instruction: “It is better that you don’t make a large program. Remain a humble program. In bhakti there is no grotesque program. A humble program is better. We are doing all these grotesque programs to allure the masses. My Guru Maharaja used to say that no one hears from a person coming from a humble, simple life. You remain always very humble....Women when not with husband must live very very humbly and simple life.” –letter to Yamuna and Dinatarine 1/13/76, Calcutta

Their main argument, it seems, for women becoming gurus has been to “increase the preaching”, but the above letter states that it is not a woman’s business to allure the masses on a grand scale. Bhakti is not dependent upon such things. As for the preaching, what sort of people will it attract? How will it affect our society? For unmarried women, therefore, Prabhupada desired that they take the humble position.

CREATING HARDSHIP FOR OTHERS

Even if a senior woman is able to perform the duties of guru-ship very nicely, she should be the rare, self-effulgent exception rather than the norm. Bg 3.35 warns the rest of us, “To do another’s duty, even though perfectly, is dangerous.” Why is it dangerous? First of all, it sends the wrong message to others. Women’s real duties will be neglected or set aside as something insignificant. This in turn creates a social imbalance and hardship for others, which we can already witness practically.

I can relate some sad stories about devotee children (a few were written about in an earlier post on my blog) having spent a lot of time with them, including listening to them. In other words, if the Hare Krishna movement wants to avoid suffering from another gurukuli lawsuit, Vedic womanhood (Bg 1.40p)

ought to be promoted instead of female guruship. We sometimes hear talk about how the men in our movement are not qualified to lead women, but it is a woman's hand that rocks the cradle (Well, since they don't want to do that anymore, God only knows who ended up rocking it). We hear so much complaint about exploitation of women, but what about the unspoken abuses towards men—who are not known to complain loudly like a woman does—and their children when families are neglected by their wives and mothers? We hear nowadays, over and over again, “A Vaisnava can do anything” - but a child's mother is irreplaceable.

In this regard, writer and ex-lawyer Carolyn Graglia makes a monumental case in her book “Domestic Tranquility. A Brief Against Feminism”, demonstrating with hundreds of pages of evidence how feminism was a big factor in creating the child-hating, sexually perverse culture we live in today. Not only that, but when the majority of women feel compelled to be out working a job, those who do choose to stay home find that there is not a female neighbor in sight! Not so long ago it was the other way around; generally mothers, grandmothers and housewives could be found in every home, supporting one another and sharing a common interest in what was once considered human society's most sacred duties.

It's something my mother and grandmother experienced, but is foreign to the present generation. Now any woman that dares to remain at home often feels frustrated, unrecognized, derided and alone. To learn how to care for her child or get along with her husband she has to read a book. All this gives further evidence of the sort of social imbalance, hardship and untold heartache that feminism creates for others. Nor are the working women any happier, “Despite the increased opportunities we have in society, to hold jobs, earn equal wages, we are becoming less satisfied. It is possible that these opportunities have become more of a burden. Not only can women do more, but maybe our standards have increased so that we expect women to do more.” (excerpt from Superwoman-Can We Do It All?)

HIDDEN MISOGYNY

Meanwhile, while thousands of women from other faiths are waking up from the madness, back in ISKCON, several male leaders have been falsely accused of “conspiracy” against women or they've been offensively labeled as “misogynists”, because they support Prabhupada's teachings about a woman's position according to varnasrama dharma. More amazingly, Srila Prabhupada himself has become an object of ridicule by certain women as well as their male supporters who consider it their duty to correct the founder acarya on these matters, assuming that he didn't know what he was talking about, was “old-fashioned”, etc.

Lately, there has been another controversy sparked in which I was told directly that “being addressed as ‘Mataji’ is demeaning to women.” Translation? “Your position as a mother is worthless.” To give an example of how wide spread this sort of thinking has become, Doris Stump, Swiss member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe wrote:

“Women are often represented in the media in roles traditionally assigned by society, portrayed as passive and lesser beings, mothers or sexual objects. These sexist stereotypes in the media perpetuate a simplistic, immutable and caricatured image of women and men, legitimising everyday sexism and

discriminatory practices and establishing a barrier to gender equality.” (For more quotes from the founders of modern feminism themselves, scroll towards the bottom of this article.)

Yet, when women are taught to covet the positions designated for men, such actions devalue the duties of traditional womanhood. In other words, by neglecting the things that make us women, one realizes that in reality, feminism is anything but feminine.

Due to the above considerations, therefore, one may wonder, who are the real woman-haters? If fingers must be pointed, how about pointing them at those people who mistakenly follow the teachings of feminism? Whether consciously or unconsciously, they look down upon the duties I have performed most of my life as a wife and mother. They look down upon anything that has to do with being a woman, hoping to create a genderless, utopian and ultimately impersonal society where everybody is equal in all respects or united as “all one”.

Now, it is understandable when an elderly woman who has never experienced the joy of caring for a child may feel uncomfortable or unhappy to be called a mother, but why decry something that is cherished by most women and instructed by Srila Prabhupada for his male followers? In rural India, “Mataji” is a title of honor since mothers are revered enough that when they grow old, they don’t have to rely on nursing homes or even to burden ISKCON to provide shelter or “family” in their old age. Their children remember the sacrifices made for their well-being when they were growing up, so of course they are cared for in return.

SOMETHING WE HAVE YET TO WITNESS IN ISKCON- VEDIC WOMANHOOD

In the Woman’s GBC Resolutions conference, Radha devi dasi was quoted: “Most women in ISKCON are engaged in traditional roles. We are mothers, wives, cooks, housekeepers and caretakers. We cook, we clean, we care for the children and the men in our Society, as well as caring for each other. But these tasks are not the whole of our abilities or of the contribution we have to make to Srila Prabhupada’s movement.”

“Most women in ISKCON?” “Traditional roles?” “Take care of our men?” Sorry, but I have no experience of what she is talking about. For the last thirty plus years of living in or near ISKCON temples, most the women I’ve known were either divorced, renunciates, single or childless, and if they did have any children or husband, they were usually required to perform various services outside the home or to work a job and were either too busy or too worn out devote much time for them. That’s because household life was/is regarded as maya. When I told the women in my asrama I was getting married, for example, they immediately found ways to let me know I was no longer welcome. The pressure was/is always there that the less involved you are at home the better.

Isn’t it one’s consciousness that counts, one’s service mood, not what big important service one is rendering outside her home? So, it is a matter of providing proper association and education. One woman believed that unless she was allowed to take sannyasa, she couldn’t go back to Godhead! Surely correct understanding is needed.

Then we can counteract the feminist propaganda against women's duties and womanhood in general and cultivate a class of ladies dedicated to their husbands and family life for the pleasure of guru and Krishna. In the western countries especially, most women are simply ignorant of their power to make or break their homes. We are taught to blame it all on the men, that women have some sort of impunity for the mess the world is in today.

Yet, a healthy marriage relationship is vital to happy family life, so if we want to "increase the preaching", happy family life speaks volumes and is the foundation of any sane society. It is something that is sorely lacking in ISKCON at present, because not just men should be reminded to treat women with respect, but especially women need to be instructed how to get along with men. Prabhupada's advice about male psychology given in his books is a good place to start.

Besides, it is much easier to command respect rather than to demand it.

In closing, Bhagavad-gita points out that Arjuna also considered giving up his duty, thinking it ineffective or looked down upon in society, but Krishna counteracted (Bg 3.24) that if He, Krishna, did not perform His duty, He'd be the cause of world ruination, because what persons in positions of authority perform, others will follow. This is why the feminist ideals are so harmful to a society. This is why women must seek GBC approval for diksha guruship. Thomas Jefferson sagaciously remarked: "It is error that needs the support of the government; truth can stand by itself." In contrast, Krishna exemplified King Janaka, who attained perfection solely by performance of his prescribed duties and how, although he was a self-realized soul, he continually performed his duties just for the sake of setting the proper example.

QUESTIONS:

Regarding the diksha women issue, what's the difference if someone wants to take formal initiation from a female devotee since he has been getting siksha from her all this time?

Exactly. Why not keep things the way they are! You said it your self that women as shiksha is just as good as being diksha.

Isn't it unfair to bar a woman from becoming diksha guru?

Don't try to turn the issue into sexism; that is not the issue. The issues is that the Bhagavad gita teaches us, "Do not give up your prescribed duties" for the reasons described above.

But what if there are disciples begging the woman for initiation?

We are duty bound to guide new devotees properly, and according to the Vaisnava etiquette of mayarda pratikrama, we should advise them to take shelter of the qualified devotees who have seniority over us, following in the footsteps of Uddhava who advised Vidura in this way. "One should be very careful of transgressing the law of maryada-vyatikrama because by so doing one loses his duration of life, his opulence, fame and piety and the blessings of all the world. To be well versed in the transcendental science necessitates awareness of the techniques of spiritual science." -SB 3.4.26p

LET THE FEMINISTS SPEAK

The following sample of quotes from the founders and supporters of “second wave” feminism, aren’t just about the encyclopedia’s definition of women having the “right to work, equal pay and voting privileges”. Nope. It’s something (unsurprising to me) much more sinister :

“The nuclear family must be destroyed, and people must find better ways of living together...Whatever its ultimate meaning, the break—up of families now is an objectively revolutionary process.” - Linda Gordon, *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, 1969

“We have to abolish and reform the institution of marriage...By the year 2000 we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in human potential, not God...We must understand what we are attempting is a revolution, not a public relations movement.” -Gloria Steinam, feminist leader and editor of *Ms Magazine*

“Abortion is a necessity for millions of women worldwide, for their health, for their well being, for their dreams of a better tomorrow.” -The Feminist Majority Foundation, *Feminist.org*

“You can’t call yourself a feminist if you don’t believe in the right to abortion.” — Gloria Steinam

“Being a housewife is an illegitimate profession... The choice to serve and be protected and plan towards being a family—maker is a choice that shouldn’t be. The heart of radical feminism is to change that.” - Vivian Gornick, 1981

“The simple fact is, every woman must be willing to be recognized as a lesbian to be fully feminine” - NOW/ The National Organization for Women, 1988

“We’ve begun to raise daughters more like sons...but few have the courage to raise our sons more like our daughters.” - Gloria Steinam

For further information, “Feminist Fantasies” is suggested.

Feminist history answers a lot of questions for me like why I hardly knew my mother (after 1969), why public school was my authority on life, why abortion is considered acceptable, why atheism is on the rise, why women are pressured to work outside the domestic realm, why the media is trying to convert men into thinking and acting like women, why teacher’s guides refer to the student as a “she” and no longer a “he”, why there’s so much divorce, why illicit sex is so rampant, why ISKCON varnasrama society remains a dream described in Prabhupada’s books and much, much, much more.

Your humble servant

Narada Priya devi dasi

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Comments • [comment feed]

1sita-pati

Very thought-provoking and well-written article. It makes many good, strong arguments.

One small thing though, at the end it switches focus to start to address “feminization of boys”, to put a label on it. The argument there is not as well-developed or considered as the earlier argument the promoting the adoption of men’s roles is inextricable from devaluing women’s roles.

In the last paragraph you say:”Feminist history answers a lot of questions...like...why teacher’s guides refer to the student as a “she” and no longer a “he””.

As a professional writer, my understanding is that has evolved in recent times because pronouns in English are gender specific (the vast majority of our other nouns, whether inherited from German or Latin both gendered languages, have lost gender). When writing generically about a group of people of both sexes and referring to one specific, representative individual, a choice has to be made about the gender pronoun to use (he or she). A sometimes compromise is to use “they”, which is the English gender-neutral plural third person pronoun, used in this sense as a gender neutral singular pronoun.

This compromise is unsatisfactory because it is grammatically incorrect (prescriptively, although descriptive grammars might have to recognize its use in this way); but also because it creates a state of mental abstraction. Usually a writer talks about a representative individual in the group as a means of “making it real” and practically applicable for the reader - talking about specifics, practice, and example.

In that case, your choice is either to compromise on your goal of going from the theoretical, abstract, and general to the practical, concrete, and specific; or you have to choose a gender for your pronoun.

Traditionally the gender for the pronoun has been masculine ("he"), whatever the composition of the group. Some authors now use the feminine ("she") with the understanding that if the group is of mixed gender then any insistence that the pronoun used by of masculine gender represents a bias against the identity and participation of female members of the group.

So if the students are both "he" and "she" in real life, then what's the problem with choosing "she" if you have to choose one or the other in specific writing? Why does it have to be "he"?

(Having presented this argument, I confess that in my own writing I prefer "he", but whenever I write it I am conscious of my own mental biases that make me prefer it).

Comment posted by sita-pati on April 9th, 2011

2Unregistered

Dear Mataji,

Hare Krsna.

This is an excellent article. You should write more. There are so many good points I don't even know where to start. The following one is so true:

Meanwhile, while thousands of women from other faiths are waking up from the madness, back in ISKCON, several male leaders have been falsely accused of "conspiracy" against women or they've been offensively labeled as "misogynists", because they support Prabhupada's teachings about a woman's position according to varnasrama dharma. More amazingly, Srila Prabhupada himself has become an object of ridicule by certain women as well as their male supporters who consider it their duty to correct the founder acarya on these matters, assuming that he didn't know what he was talking about, was "old-fashioned", etc.

It seems that we in ISKCON are so far behind the curve in understanding the pernicious effect of feminism. I hope that our leaders wake up before it is too late. Unfortunatley it is obvious to many that a group of entrenched ISKCON leaders actually support this madness of feminism.

Comment posted by Bhaktilata dasi on April 10th, 2011

3Sita Rama 108

Part 1.

Mataji,

You have brought up a crucial point, "a child's mother is irreplaceable". We all know this. But I have been working on a presentation of scientific studies that show the extent of the negative effects of trying to replace mothers. It is a work in progress, for now I will simple ask people to have faith in me when I say that numerous scientific studies have shown that infants,(1-5 years old), who were reared in daycare centers showed less development than those reared at home by their mothers. Development

was shown to be less in several areas including IQ. This is consistent with other scientific data. A new born child has billions of brain cells but connection between them is produced by experience. The more time the mother spends playing with the child and the more concerned the mother is with the child's well being the more connections are made and the greater the cognitive development. These are empirical facts, brain development can actually be seen with modern medical equipment.

The fact that numerous studies came out showing the negative effects of day care, of course, became a political issue. And funding became available for studies focused on disproving the previous findings. Despite this, by searching academic databases, it is still easy to find scientific articles like a 2006 study published in "The European Journal of Developmental Psychology" of 1000 children, which concludes, "We have seen, the risk are that the more hours in,(any kind of), child care across the first 4.5 years of life and, independently, the more time in child care centers, the higher the levels of problem behavior". This study cites another one of more than 3000 children in England which "... has yielded remarkably similar results". These studies do not show that children are actually ruined by day care, especially if it is high quality, but they do show there is no substitute for the mother.

Neglecting ones household duties in the name of preaching is unauthorized. And as you mentioned the example of happy householder devotees is, in itself, preaching. It is, in fact, crucial preaching because most devotees will not be lifelong celibates and we need real examples to show people they can be happy in their position; there is no need to try for artificial renunciation.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 10th, 2011

4Sita Rama 108

Part 2

But it does not follow that because of this women cannot be Guru's. Among other possibilities some women have children that are all grown up. With all due respect, I do not find your argument persuasive. You claim the argument supporting women Guru's is feminism. And you list various outrageous positions of feminists. But personally I have never heard a devotees use these feminists arguments to support women Guru's. The strongest argument addresses the best points of the opposing position. Your argument would be stronger if you quoted actual statements GBC members have used supporting their position and then made reasonable rebuttals to the arguments they ACTUALLY USE.

I may be wrong, but you seem to be saying that if a woman becomes a preacher she is accepting a duty that is not hers and she is therefore going against the instructions of the BG. You are correct to say a woman should not neglect her duty as a mother but there is no basis for saying it is wrong for women to preach per se. Read Srila Prabhupada's letter to Mother Himavalati, 12/20/69. "So I am especially proud of how my householder devotees are preaching Lord Caitanya's mission. This is a new thing in the history of the sankirtana movement. In India all acharyas and their descendents later on acted only from the man's side. The wives were at home because THAT WAS THE SYSTEM OF OLD TIMES THAT WOMEN WERE NOT REQUIRED TO GO OUT. BUT IN THE BHAGAVADA GITA WE FIND THAT WOMEN ARE ALSO COMPETENT LIKE THE MEN IN THE MATTER OF KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT. THEREFORE

PLEASE CARRY ON THESE MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES AND PROVE BY PRACTICAL EXAMPLE THAT THERE IS NO BAR FOR ANYONE IN THE MATTER OF PREACHING WORK FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS".(capital letters added). A woman preacher has not accepted a duty that is not hers.

Y.s.

Sita Rama das

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 11th, 2011

5Sita Rama 108

Continuation from part 1:

But it does not follow that because of this women cannot be Guru's. Among other possibilities some women have children that are all grown up. With all due respect, I do not find your argument persuasive. You claim the argument supporting women Guru's is feminism. And you list various outrageous positions of feminists. But personally I have never heard a devotee use these feminists arguments to support women Guru's. The strongest argument addresses the best points of the opposing position. Your argument would be stronger if you quoted actual statements GBC members have used supporting their position and then made reasonable rebuttals to the arguments they ACTUALLY USE.

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Y.s.

Sita Rama das

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 11th, 2011

6Unregistered

Excellent article!! So many great points and quotes!! Bravo!

Yes, suggesting women take on the role of diksha guru is a new thing, something Prabhupada never introduced. Neither did he want women sannyasi. Yet practically we see that the lifestyle of the diksha guru closely resembles that of a sannyasi and usually includes traveling around the world, preaching, and associating with men which is dangerous for both the woman and for the men. There is no bar to women preaching in the course of her day while maintaining her constitutional service, without having to become an initiating spiritual master.

The argument given to support women gurus is that on the spiritual platform we are all equal, but our philosophy is that even advanced devotees are to follow varnasrama. The Women's Ministry's goals do not appear to take varnasrama seriously, even though many of their members and spokeswomen are long time devotees of 30-40 years.

Comment posted by sitadasi on April 11th, 2011

7bhakta piyush

With regard to comment no. 4, and 5 how can it be implied that the author is rejecting preaching by women when the article itself is "preaching" In addition the letter to Mother Himavalati was clearly to a householder it may be incorrect to use it to support female "guruship" or in other words an independent woman taking to the renounced order.

Comment posted by bhakta piyush on April 12th, 2011

8Akruranatha

With regard to comment no. 7, we should be careful not to confuse "guruship" with the renounced order. Clearly, a guru does not have to be a sannyasi: "kiba vipra kiba nyasi sudra kena naya..."

A guru is one who can explain the science of Krishna and can train a disciple to achieve perfection in devotional service: "...yei krsna-tattva vetta sei guru haya."

Sitadasi observes (comment no. 6): "Yet practically we see that the lifestyle of the diksha guru closely resembles that of a sannyasi and usually includes traveling around the world, preaching, and associating with men which is dangerous for both the woman and for the men."

It may be that this "lifestyle of the diksha guru" is just a particular manifestation of how many diksha gurus currently behave in ISKCON, rather than how diksha gurus are always supposed to behave in broader Gaudiya Vaisnavism. That is, we can imagine a society with many local diksha gurus, each having just a small number of local disciples, without violating the tenets of the universal principles of Bhakti Yoga as taught in Nectar of Devotion.

Perhaps it is due to the practical considerations of our time, the scarcity of actually qualified initiating gurus, and the needs of the preaching institution and greater preaching mission, that have brought about the "lifestyle of the diksha guru" that we generally see in contemporary ISKCON. Perhaps it will be that way, as a practical matter, for many years to come.

However, we should recognize the principle at least, that spiritual masters can be householders, can be brahmacaris, can be born in a family of merchants or laborers, and can even be engaged in the occupations of merchants or laborers.

It is not that a guru has to be a brahmana. Vivasvan instructed Manu, who instructed Ikshvaku, and the saintly kings understood it in parampara. Later, Krishna instructed Arjuna. At least we can see that ksatriyas and saintly kings can be gurus from this example. (Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Arjuna is His eternal associate, but they are playing the role of ksatriyas in human society.)

Cintamani was guru to Bilvamangal Thakur although she was woman and prostitute. She was varmapradarsika guru, not diksha guru, but still the Thakur respected her as his guru.

I think the acaryas are teaching us to accept guru in this way: whomever can train us to become true lovers of Krishna should be accepted, regardless of external designation.

Comment posted by Akruranatha on April 12th, 2011

9Sita Rama 108

I would like to see this argument developed. Comment 6 mentions that even advanced devotees must follow varnarama. Comment 7 says female Guruship is, in other words, an independent woman taking to the renounced order of life. Mother Narada Priya says female guru's is feminism and feminism is against varnasrama.

When preaching to modern people we can explain the fact that there is no bar for women to achieve spiritual perfection. Which means they can become full detached from material enjoyment. Yet women cannot take sanyasa. The only logical conclusion is there are external, social, cultural, facts that make sanyasa by women undesirable. We can explain these realities to reasonable people. Women are barred from sanyasa because of social cultural considerations.

The arguments above are equating female guruship with female sanyasa. They claim women guru's goes varnasrama and will cause serious social disruption in our ISKCON society. Hypothetically I can see that there MAY be some grounds for this.

I am interested in preaching to reasonable people. Right now I can tell a person why sanyasa is forbidden for women in ISKCON. I can tell a person women ARE allowed to be guru's in ISKCON. I would like to be able to say that some members are apposed to women gurus and explain the reasonable grounds for that opposition. But right now all I can say is that some people call this feminism and in ISKCON we are supposed to be against feminism. But there are hundreds of types of feminism and if someone asks me what those apposing women guru's mean when they say feminism I will not be able to answer. Can you please explain exactly what you mean and not simply use a term that might mean hundreds of different things.

Some claim Srila Prabhupada never said women could be guru's in ISKCON. This is not a fact. But I will not cite references where Srila Prabhupada sanctioned this because that will invoke a contest.

So simply saying Srila Prabhupada did not approve of it, or it is feminism, or we should focus on Vedic womanhood instead,(as if we cannot support both) is fine for people who are already against this. But it does not do much in terms of persuading a person who is open minded on the subject. Can you please try to clarify your points and make a more persuasive argument?

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 12th, 2011

10Unregistered

Very nice article so many excellent points.

Bhakta Piyush is of course correct in his comments which I agree with.

I'm actually surprised it hasn't been seriously attacked yet by the feminist camp.

Comment posted by Atmavidya Dasa on April 13th, 2011

11Akruranatha

In 1963, Betty Friedan published "The Feminine Mystique" and ushered in the second big wave of American feminism (which had died down after the suffrage movement had succeeded in getting the vote for women). The idea of the book was that so many young, creative, intelligent women with college degrees and marketable skills, were feeling unhappy, bored and cooped up in the social roles prescribed for them in post-war America, spending their time alone in the home with children and without more intellectually satisfying and artistic, aesthetically meaningful engagements.

From a devotee's perspective, we can say, "Of course they were bored and unhappy. They were not chanting their rounds. They were not doing any Deity worship. They were not hearing Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita!"

Only unmotivated, uninterrupted devotional service is really able to satisfy any of us. Not surprisingly, other writers of the time were exploring why their male counterparts, the "organization men" in their grey flannel suits, were feeling lost, full of anxiety and alienation, in a "lonely crowd", their sons felt that they were "growing up absurd", "rebels without a cause" and so on.

Society in the 1950s and 1960s was relatively prosperous and the cold war was most of the time merely simmering. People had leisure time and homes in the suburbs, but there still was a lack of adventure and thrill and meaning and beauty in life. There was still a "pinprick somewhere in the social body at large".

It was because they needed Krishna consciousness. They still do. We should not waste our time quarreling over petty issues like trying to prevent qualified women from giving Bhagavatam class, and we should get the word out to the still sleeping people: "Here is what you are missing. Here is the life that is full of flavor and clarity and connectedness and beauty. Here is the great literature that can form the basis of a new culture and civilization where everyone is treated with due dignity and respect, where

the humble sage by virtue of true wisdom sees the underlying equality of all living beings, including cow, brahmana, elephant, dog-eater and dog.”

The desperate need of the modern world is to have qualified preachers of Srimad-Bhagavatam, introducing people to the real panacea for the many ills of the modern world, that Hare Krishna mantra and the science of devotional service. Even the ecological problems and wars can be solved by this Sankirtan. We need many real preachers!

Comment posted by Akruranatha on April 13th, 2011

12Akruranatha

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

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

[Interview, Toronto, June 18, 1976]

“Woman is never offered sannyasa in the Vedic culture.”

[SP letter to Nevatiaji, July 16, 1970]

It appears from the above statements of Srila Prabhupada that women should not be initiated as sannyasis, that according to Vedic culture (as we know) they are expected to be protected by fathers, then by husbands, and then by grown up sons.

Nevertheless, if a woman is qualified by dint of being cognizant of the science of Krsna, then there is no bar to her being a spiritual master.

Whether the disciple will call her “Guru Maharani” or “Mataji” or something else should be a matter decided by the qualified guru and her disciple, and it does not appear to be a particularly important point. The main thing is, can she actually train her disciple to become a pure devotee of Krishna.

And of course in ISKCON, everyone has the benefit of the instructions of our param-guru and Founder-Acarya Srila Prabhupada. But basically the standard for being a guru, whether man or woman, appears to be the same. One must be sufficiently versed and realized in the science of Krishna to be able to guide one’s disciples to achieve the perfection of life. Anyone who is a first class disciple may later act as a first class guru, without consideration of external formalities such as caste or age or asrama or occupation.

Of course in ISKCON there may be practical institutional considerations, but the philosophical principle is clear. "Yei krsna-tattva vetta sei guru haya."

Comment posted by Akruranatha on April 13th, 2011

13Phalini devi dasi

Dear Devotees,

Namonamaha. Hare Krsna. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Thank you for all your comments. Mother Narada Priya has asked me to explain to all of you that she did not post this article here and she does not know who did. Because she did not post her article here, she will not be responding to comments here. If you would like to make a comment about this article, kindly go to her blog domesticdevotion@blogspot.com and contact her through her email which is posted there. She has posted a response to Sita-Rama Prabhu's comments there (it's currently on the front page).

Your servant,

Phalini devi dasi

Comment posted by Phalini devi dasi on April 14th, 2011

14Sita Rama 108

If we accept that equality for women means they must accept roles traditionally held by men, we devalue roles traditionally held by women, most importantly the role of mother. Some forms of feminism devalue the role of mothers, but some forms of contemporary feminism acknowledge that trying to copy men implicitly accepts men as superior so they reject this attempt. At any rate devaluing the roles of mothers is diametrically opposed to the values of Vedic culture. If we can give reasonable arguments to show that something devalues mothers we should do so. The argument that we should emphasize Vedic womanhood, not women gurus implies that women guru's devalue the role of mothers. I do not see how it does that. To me it shows that women should be honored for their qualities, which is consistent with honoring women for being mothers.

However, I have seen that certain men in ISKCON have, for many years, devalued the position of women in the name of Vedic culture. They emphasize women's place is in the home but then belittle this position. They say the wife should assist the husband in his service. But if we suggest that a man see supporting his wife as assisting her in her service as mother they object. The husband's service to Krishna is substantial and the wife can share the benefits of it by assisting him. But the service of being a mother is not spiritual, it is material. The man wants to become disentangled in this service to maya not share the results. In other words, rather than honoring the role of mothers in ISKCON certain men have stigmatized it.

Vedic culture assigns women to the role of mothers. Women have become so habituated to the stigmatization of their role that when they see a woman accepting a highly honored role, they think it must be something women shouldn't be assigned to. They think, NO, mothers must be honored, not women Guru's. They are not being honored as mothers and when they see women honored as gurus they feel this lack of honor very acutely. But they have misplaced the blame. It is not the women guru's who are devaluing motherhood. The devaluing of motherhood is a deeply entrenched idea based on our history of false renunciation and inability to embrace the idea of raising children as a service to Krishna.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 14th, 2011

15Unregistered

Dandabats. I'm currently doing an assignment for college about Krishna consciousness culture in Australia and this discussion has given me some juicy subject matter. Please allow me to clarify the main point(s).

- 1) Women can be guru, but not initiating gurus.
- 2) Women may be living a renounced life, but cannot be given sannyasa in the standard or official way. Put another way, women's renunciation cannot be officially recognised.
- 3) Where discrimination apparently occurs (eg no sannyas for women), it is to protect social and cultural rationale about difference between the sexes from scrutiny which would seem to undermine the authority of parampara, but this does not mean we encourage social or cultural discrimination on the basis of sex in general. In other words, Iskcon does not encourage sex discrimination overtly or in a general way, but reserves the right to discriminate anyway because it may be a part of our socio-cultural practice.

Discrimination itself is not a bad thing. We do it all the time. In this case, although it seems our ways are out of line with the modern trend of socio-cultural reform in the mainstream, actually we are simply following our bona fide instructions on the matter of who is to be officially recognised as sannyas and therefore allowed to initiate disciples.

This discrimination, far from being a misunderstanding, makes us culturally distinct from the modern trend in mainstream socio-cultural reform. After all, there is no recommendation from our spiritual authorities that we must 'follow suit' and reform ourselves along popular lines, whenever such trends come about. Therefore, we don't have to reform ourselves along the lines of feminism.

We are practitioners of a traditional culture as it has been preserved and given to us. If we decide to leave it as it is or not is the decision of those who are authorised in our culture to make such decisions on our part. Other cultures may make those decisions in some other way that may be more in-line with modern trends, but with us that is the way. And we reserve the right to retain practices and beliefs that make us distinct, especially where it is a kind of requirement.

One question though. If one takes some specific instruction from a female that is not technically authorised by the GBC, is there a risk that following such advice may not result in proper spiritual advancement?

Hare Krishna and dandabats.

Comment posted by bhaktamike on April 14th, 2011

16Phalini devi dasi

Correction regarding Comment # 13:

Dear Devotees,

Please excuse me. I posted the wrong URL for Mother Narada Priya's blog.

Here's the correct address:

<http://domesticdevotion108.blogspot.com/>

Sorry for the mistake.

Your aspiring servant,

Phalini devi dasi

Comment posted by Phalini devi dasi on April 15th, 2011

17Unregistered

re #13

Well mother Phalini that is a surprise but whoever posted this article has done a great service. It seems to be very popular and at last count has generated 41 "FaceBook likes"

And Bhakta Mike that was a great comment. You are right

"And we reserve the right to retain practices and beliefs that make us distinct, especially where it is a kind of requirement."

And in this way we will stand out from the crowd. In marketing this is called "Branding". Companies pay millions even billions of \$ to have distinctive branding.

But here in ISKCON some people want to destroy what makes us unique and attractive so that we can be "main stream." I don't know about you but did anyone ever notice just how polluted that stream is?

Comment posted by Bhaktilata dasi on April 16th, 2011

18Sita Rama 108

Mother Bhaktilata, and Bhakta Mike,

It is an axiom,(in other words a no brainer), that for the GBC to compromise our philosophy in an attempt to go mainstream is bogus. But you need to back up your claim that this is the reason the GBC is endorsing women guru's.

What mainstream organization has a tradition similar to women Guru's, or Guru's at all. We bow down to the guru and take a vow to refrain from sex except for procreation. This is never going to become a mainstream custom. If someone thinks it is going to be in vogue in the near future they are hallucinating. Do you really think the GBC is THAT clueless that they think having women guru's will cause taking initiation to become a mainstream practice?

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on April 16th, 2011

19Unregistered

Hare Krsna,

Thanks for that Sita Rama. Perhaps there was a little confusion about what I was saying. As far as I know, the GBC are not endorsing female gurus as initiating gurus. I wasn't suggesting that the GBC allowing female gurus as initiators would make initiation more mainstream. Or somehow more common or acceptable to mainstream society. I certainly don't think people in the mainstream will suddenly start abiding by the four regulative principles just because females told them to.

I was suggesting that the trend towards so-called 'feminism' itself is a mainstream phenomena. It may suggest that to be modern, we should be obliged to make female gurus (as initiators). But actually we are not obliged to become more mainstream or modern in that way. Our tradition is distinct and compromise on these issues is not required by our tradition.

In answer to your question: "What mainstream organization has a tradition similar to women Guru's, or Guru's at all"?

No organisation has female gurus (actually, there are a couple in India whom not everyone even acknowledges), but many have female chief executives. Or board members. Or trustees. That is why I was saying that female gurus initiating might be understood as being 'in-line' with modern feminist trends.

I hope that clears up any confusion.

Comment posted by bhaktamike on April 19th, 2011

20Urmila

Please accept my obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

Anyone who is interested in guru/sadhu/sastra on this issue can read the paper on female disksa gurus at http://www.dandavats.com/?page_id=506 The GBC accepted this paper and approved, in 2009, the idea that women could initiate disciples in ISKCON.

Your servant, Urmila devi dasi

Comment posted by Urmila on April 24th, 2011

21Unregistered

I assume you are talking about “Female Diksha-gurus in ISKCON: A paper by the Sastric Advisory Council (SAC)”

I saw 2-3 papers written on behalf of the Indian RGB that seriously contested this paper and its conclusions. One should read them as well before drawing any conclusions. Because after reading these papers I thought the SAC paper to be, how shall we say in a tactful way, not very useful or accurate.

I wonder if these Indian RGB papers have been published anywhere? Maybe Dandavatas can host them as well. They are full of cogent sastric references and analyses that nullify the conclusions of the SAC paper which in my humble opinion seemed bias towards a certain predetermined conclusion.

In any case both views should be given equal time not just a one-sided view.

Comment posted by Atmavidya Dasa on April 26th, 2011

22Akruranatha

If “Feminism” is presented (as it often is) as an ideology of social equality of women and men on the material platform, then we can criticize it in many ways. That is, there are healthy, beneficial reasons for having different social roles for men and women (and for men in different varnas and asramas).

If, on the other hand, “Feminism” is understood as a movement for representing the interests of women generally, to prevent mistreatment and abuse of women, and to promote the highest welfare for women — to provide girls and women with a safe and beneficial environment in which to live fulfilling and successful, happy lives — we should be prepared to say (with a straight face) that Krishna consciousness or true Vaisnava culture offers solutions and represents the best that such a view of “Feminism” has to offer.

That is to say, not just for women, but for all members of society, in all walks of life, the “isavasyam” approach to social organization should result in the highest ideals of justice and social harmony and real spiritual progress and happiness for everyone. Krishna consciousness promotes happiness and justice.

Wherever there is Krishna and Arjuna there is opulence, victory, power and morality. Krishna consciousness is not a bitter pill, a means of controlling people and getting them to accept their miserable lot while expecting some better situation in the hereafter. Our motto is “Chant Hare Krishna and be happy!” Not, “Chant Hare Krishna and endure misery and injustice.”

Devotees can bear the burdens and austerities of the world while offering obeisances to Krishna ("tat te 'nukampam susumiksamano..."), and they recognize that this world is a place of misery and death from the highest planet to the lowest (duhkalayam asavtam). Nevertheless we are not pessimists. We see that the world is created by Krishna with a natural order, and that when Krishna conscious persons occupy the leading positions, human society becomes very peaceful and harmonious, the citizens become happy and fulfilled and make spiritual progress.

The tendency may be to become an anti-party: "the mundane feminists seek material equality and we are against that." If we are not careful it makes us sound like we are not interested in the welfare of women.

It would be better if we could present a positive, Krishna conscious program for the true welfare of girls and women, even deploring the mistreatment that sometimes goes on in the name of "religion."

Comment posted by Akruranatha on April 27th, 2011

23Unregistered

@Atmavidya in #21

I saw 2-3 papers written on behalf of the Indian RGB that seriously contested this paper and its conclusions. One should read them as well before drawing any conclusions. Because after reading these papers I thought the SAC paper to be, how shall we say in a tactful way, not very useful or accurate.

I also saw some of these papers and agree with Atmavidya's conclusions. I think I still have them on my hard drive. I will search to see if I still have them, if so will ask Dandavatas to publish or host it like it did the SAC paper.

Comment posted by Somayaji on April 28th, 2011

24bhakta piyush

A question arises: Two major regions where Krishna Consciousness is spreading rapidly, namely India and Russia are following the current guru system, will female guruship affect this growth, if so in what way? What representation do those regions have in the decision making process?

Comment posted by bhakta piyush on April 29th, 2011

25Unregistered

The SAC paper does not adequately address the following reference regarding a prohibition against Suniti becoming diksa-guru:

"Suniti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Maharaja's diksa-guru." (Bhag. 4.12.32 purport)

The SAC makes the point that this pastime of Dhruva was enacted during Svayambhuva Manu's reign.... Does that mean it is irrelevant today?

Does this statement mean Suniti couldn't initiate only because she was Dhruva's mother? Or was it because women in general cannot initiate any man? Does it have to do with women not receiving the sacred thread of brahmanas ? Women cannot take sannyasa either. Is this a similar prohibition?

Comment posted by sitadasi on April 29th, 2011

26bhakta piyush

Within comment #14 it is stated "The husband's service to Krishna is substantial and the wife can share the benefits of it by assisting him. But the service of being a mother is not spiritual, it is material."

We can serve Krishna in many different ways, being a mother can be in itself spiritual –

Prabhupada wrote a letter to Arundhati, and he said "For you child worship is more important than deity worship. If you cannot spend time with him, stop pujari duties. These children are given to us by Krishna. They are not ordinary. They are Vaikuntha children.... This is a very great responsibility, do not neglect it or become confused..."

Ref: <http://iskconcommunications.bl.....class.html>

Our teacher, Srila Prabhupada, explained how the love between mother and child is the purest form of love found in this world. How wonderful if we could take that spirit, foster a mood of gratitude, and share that same spirit with the entire world.

Ref: <http://news.iskcon.org/node/3315>

A woman can serve her husband and raise her children in Krishna consciousness serve Krishna in her home and still attain the highest

goal even before her husband, that example we have seen in the wives of the Brahmanas

Ref: Krishna Book: Delivering the Wives of the Brahmanas.

“My dear wives of the brahmanas,” Krsna said. “You can now return to your homes. Engage yourselves in sacrificial activities and be engaged in the service of your husbands and household affairs so that your husbands will be pleased with you, and the sacrifice which they have begun will be properly executed. After all, your husbands are householders, and without your help how can they execute their prescribed duties?”

continued....

Comment posted by bhakta piyush on April 30th, 2011

27bhakta piyush

The wives of the brahmanas replied, “Dear Lord, this sort of instruction does not befit You. Your eternal promise is that You will always protect Your devotees, and now You must fulfill this promise. Anyone who comes and surrenders unto You never goes back to the conditioned life of material existence. We expect that You will now fulfill Your promise. We have surrendered unto Your lotus feet, which are covered by the tulasi leaves, so we have no more desire to return to the company of our so-called relatives, friends, and society and give up the shelter of Your lotus feet. And what shall we do, returning home? Our husbands, brothers, fathers, sons, mothers and our friends do not expect to see us because we have already left them all. Therefore we have no shelter to return to. Please, therefore, do not

ask us to return home, but arrange for our stay under Your lotus feet so that we can eternally live under Your protection.”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied, “My dear wives, rest assured that your husbands will not neglect you on your return, nor will your brothers, sons, or fathers refuse to accept you. Because you are My pure devotees, not only your relatives but also people in general, as well as the demigods, will be satisfied with you.” Krsna is situated as the Supersoul in everyone’s heart. So if someone becomes a pure devotee of Lord Krsna, he immediately becomes pleasing to everyone. The pure devotee of Lord Krsna is never inimical to anyone. A sane person cannot be an enemy of a pure devotee.

“Transcendental love for Me does not depend upon bodily connection,” Krsna said further, “but anyone whose mind is always absorbed in Me will surely, very soon, come to Me for My eternal association.”

After being instructed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all the wives again returned home to their respective husbands. Pleased to see their wives back home, the brahmanas executed the performances of sacrifices by sitting together, as it is enjoined in the sastras.

According to Vedic principle, religious rituals must be executed by the husband and wife together. When the brahmanas’ wives returned, the sacrifice was duly and nicely executed. One of the brahmanas’ wives, however, who was forcibly checked from going to see Krsna, began to remember Him as she heard of His bodily features. Being completely absorbed in His thought, she gave up her material body conditioned by the laws of nature..

Comment posted by bhakta piyush on April 30th, 2011

28bhakta piyush

...continued...

Is some service inferior or material? Can anyone say what the best specific service is? There is a story of Vidura's wife - Parshavi who was so overwhelmed with love of Krishna when she fed Him bananas, she was actually throwing away the fruit and feeding Krishna the peels instead but Krishna ate these peels with great affection. The mood in which any service is done is always more important, we all know that.

Coming back to the influence of feminism: Following the example of the wives of the Brahmins, we find that they were simple, humble and had an attitude of unconditional service, whereas their husbands were ritualistic and proud.

We are not arguing inferior or superior positions of males and females, to do so is counter-productive . As for attaining the level of great personalities like Srimati Jahnavi Devi, Srimati Kuntidevi or other great associate devotees of the Lord -that is no easy task for anyone male or female bodied. One thing we may have a tendency to do is take the example of some great historic spiritual personalities and use it to exemplify the whole gender species, what I mean to say is that if a great man or woman did something wonderful in the past, that glory, in the true sense cannot be used as a basis for promoting any individual man or woman in the present. If we are to be proper, this premise can only be used in a very general sense. We are all

individuals, independent living entities and are judged on our own merits.

An expansion of this peculiarity is to take one of those pure devotee examples which is often set in a traditional/subservient atmosphere and use it for the promotion of a modern ideal which is in fact quite the opposite in nature.

This simple devotional attitude of the wives of the Brahmanas was not found in the men, and the men were lamenting that they did not attain the level of their wives. The men learned from their wives the need to be simple and humble.

Ultimately aren't we all supposed to be females serving only one Purusha, Krishna? Can we say that all females would act in the way the wives of the Brahmins did? Does that mean we must all be female for females' sake or was the traditional modest subservient attitude pleasing to Krishna. Feminism does not promote service attitude, rather it creates a sense of pride for having a particular type of body. Just another -ism to add to the list.

Comment posted by bhakta piyush on April 30th, 2011

29Unregistered

There is absolutely no prohibition in Gaudiya Vaisnavism against women becoming diksa gurus.

This is proven by the fact that in times past a number of women were lauded as diksa gurus in the Gaudiya tradition. The most prominent being Jahnava Ma and Gangamata Goswamini.

Srila Prabhupada's purport to (SB 4.12.32) indicates that traditionally mothers do not give diksa to their sons. However, one should not identify spirituality with the social norms that were prevalent in previous centuries. Cultural considerations like these were transcended to some extent in Mahaprabhu's time in light of his emphasis on essential spirituality. Therefore, there was no prohibition against Jahnava-devi being diksa-guru for her nephew/stepson Virabhadra and other spiritual luminaries of the time. More

women diksa-gurus followed her in succession and other women also initiated in various other Gaudiya Vaisnava lineages.

In regards to this issue of Women and sannyasa, Thakura Bhaktivinoda has written the following in Shri Chaitanya-shikshamrita 2/4: "There are no ashramas acceptable by women other than the householder (grihastha) ashrama or in specific cases as per time, place and circumstance the vanaprastha ashrama. Of course there can be some exceptional rare cases when an extraordinary and greatly advanced woman in bhakti can accept the brahmacharya and sannyasa ashramas and make a success of her spiritual life. But in the normal and general case, these ashramas are not meant for women because of their delicate faith, delicate body and delicate intelligence."

Here Bhaktivinoda specifically states that in exceptional cases a greatly advanced woman in bhakti can accept the brahmacharya and sannyasa ashramas and make a success of her spiritual life. He reasons here that ordinarily women do not take sannyasa because they are "delicate" in a number of ways—which are of course material reasons. He does not cite any spiritual reasons. Today's women are not so delicate—so other than tradition there is no real reason why a woman cannot take some type of sannyasa—as in the example of Gangamata Goswami. Indeed, in consideration modern social norms Srila Prabhupada broke tradition and Vedic rules on the matter when he established the brahmachari ashrama in his society.

Brahma dasa

Comment posted by brahma dasa on April 30th, 2011

30Unregistered

oops, I wrote brahmachari instead of brahmacharini. So the last sentence should read:

Indeed, in consideration modern social norms Srila Prabhupada broke tradition and Vedic rules on the matter when he established the brahmacharini ashrama in his society.

Brahma

Comment posted by brahma dasa on April 30th, 2011

31Sita Rama 108

Dear Bhakta Piyush Prabhu.

I am essentially in agreement with your comments 26-27-28. You will see that my comments 3, 4 also emphasize the importance of a mother's service. And also in comment 102 of article ,HG Urimila Mataji Live from Mayapur, I quoted the letter From Srila Prabhuda where he told Mother Arundhati, for her, baby worship was more important than Deity worship.

So we seem to be on the same page in this regard. You take issue with the idea expressed in a couple of sentences in my comment #14 "The husband service to Krishna is substantial and the wife can share in

the benefits of it by assisting him. But the service of being a mother is not spiritual it is material". Although I am stating the obvious I am going to point out that I certainly also disagree with the idea in these two sentences. The full paragraph below clearly shows I was paraphrasing an attitude that incorrectly stigmatizes mothers instead of highly honoring them as per Vedic values.

However, I have seen that certain men in ISKCON have, for many years, devalued the position of women in the name of Vedic culture. They emphasize women's place is in the home but then belittle this position. They say the wife should assist the husband in his service. But if we suggest that a man see supporting his wife as assisting her in her service as mother they object. The husband's service to Krishna is substantial and the wife can share the benefits of it by assisting him. But the service of being a mother is not spiritual, it is material. The man wants to become disentangled in this service to maya not share the results. In other words, rather than honoring the role of mothers in ISKCON certain men have stigmatized.

I do not think you were trying to say the two sentences you pulled out of the paragraph were my personal opinion but I just wanted to make sure we were square about on this point.

Your servant,

Sita Rama dasa

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on May 1st, 2011

32Sita Rama 108

Dear Piyush Prabhu,

I want to further clarify points I have previously alluded to. Some devotees seem to confuse western materialistic culture prior to 1950 with the ideal Vedic standard. The similarity of western culture before 1950, and Vedic culture is that in both the women's place was in the home. But the difference is, because of being on rooted on the physical plane, in the West, people can only see the external. Therefore they see the work of a mother as on the level of unskilled labor or essentially a diaper changer.

Therefore in the West women think they must become professionals to be equal. The fact is at present women earn the majority of advanced degrees. We know nature gives women the needed skills to be mothers. The fact that they can excel in advanced degrees shows that the skills needed to be a mother can instead be used to become a professional. In other word a mother is not an unintelligent diaper changer. She has natural intelligence of how to be an educator of her children. She knows the child's psychology. Women earn advanced degrees in public policy, become lawyers and judges, etc, because they been given the ability of mothers to be able to negotiate conflicts that arise several times a day between siblings. One may say this is not comparable to the complexity of political negotiations but actually it is harder in some sense. The mother must settle dispute with children in a way that gives each child faith that there is fairness and justice in the world.

I have seen entire article written on Varnasrghama that do not mention the duty of women as mothers. They only mention the role of women as a wife's serving their husbands sense gratification. This is not Vedic culture. This is materialistic culture. A materialist sees another in terms of their own sense gratification and not as a separate being. A spiritual couple experiences oneness between each of their individual souls as cooperators in spiritual service. The materialists see others as one with himself in that all are meant for his physical pleasure. Therefore he doesn't respect them as individuals; they are just material objects for meant for his enjoyment. We have to be able to see the difference in these two concepts of oneness in husband and wife.

Comment posted by Sita Rama 108 on May 1st, 2011

33Unregistered

Part 1 of 2 resent because of an error...

The SAC, in order to support their conclusion of women becoming initiating gurus, has included a substantial amount of quotes from unauthorized people and books outside of our parampara lineage. It is clear from the SB 4.12.32 verse, however, that Suniti, because she was a woman, could not become Dhruva's diksa guru:

SB 4.12.32 “. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's dikṣā-guru. Still, he was not less obliged to Sunīti.”

Jahnava Devi is the only example of female acarya with disciples Srila Prabhupada mentions but he does not present her giving diksha as something we should do in the future in ISKCON. He presents Jahnava Devi as a “very special case” of acarya and although She “was accepted as” acarya but “She did not declare” Herself as such. Jahnava is not listed as acarya in our parampara; her disciples are counted among those of Lord Nityananda. Jahnava Mata was guru mata, guru patni of Lord Nityananda, the original guru! She gave Virabhadra initiation after She exhibited Her four armed form to him! No disrespect intended but none of the women in our movement are as rare and exceptional as this!

Gangamata's example is used by the SAC to support their case, although Prabhupada never mentions her. We note that Gangamata gave a 10 syllable mantra to her disciple, not the Maha Mantra. Also, according to Bhanu Swami, there was no fire yajna performed in her initiations. Her example, as well as other examples the SAC give, is therefore outside our line of disciplic succession.

Just as Gangamata Goswamini's example is used to justify women gurus, it could also be used for women sannyasinis. There were other goswaminis in her time we could research and we have this reference from Srila Prabhupada:

“So now Yamunā has taken a very nice path. She has also become sannyāsīnī. Although there is no sannyāsīnī for women, but she has voluntarily taken. “ Gurudasa Sannyasa Initiation — San Francisco, July 21, 1975 and this one:

“Anyone acting for Krishna, he is a sannyasi or sannyasini.” Letter to: Aditya — Mayapur 4 February, 1976

However Prabhupada also says in the above letter:

“So spiritually everyone is equal. But materially a woman cannot be given Sannyasa. But you should not be bothered because you are serving on the spiritual platform.”

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 4th, 2011

34Unregistered

part 2

“So spiritually everyone is equal. But materially a woman cannot be given Sannyasa. But you should not be bothered because you are serving on the spiritual platform.”

We know that Prabhupada never offered sannyasa initiation to women but he said spiritually women can be sannyasini. The same reasoning can be used to support this argument that is used for women gurus.

Prabhupada explains that women are women are sannyasis on the spiritual platform but materially they are not. Similarly we can say women are Brahmana or guru on the spiritual platform but materially they are not. Only the wife of a brahmana shares her husband’s social position.

“Indian man (6): Śrīla Prabhupāda, since there is no distinction between “man” and “woman”—these are both designations—is it possible for a woman to become a brāhmaṇa?

Brahmānanda: Is it possible for a woman to become a brāhmaṇa?

Prabhupāda: He is... Woman is a brāhmaṇa’s wife. Then she is automatically a brāhmaṇa.

Indian man (6): Suppose she doesn’t want to get married for the rest of her life, just wants to serve the Lord?

Prabhupāda: So in his spiritual position everyone is a brāhmaṇa.

Brahmānanda: But you give brahminical initiation to unmarried women.

Prabhupāda: Yes. But on spiritual point she is brāhmaṇa. On the spiritual platform there is no such distinction.

Devotee (7): Oh, it’s not possible for a woman to become a sannyāsī.

Prabhupāda: No.”

Morning Walk, November 2, 1975, Nairobi

ISKCON leaders have to be careful not to manufacture new ideas and policies that are incongruent with our guru, sadhu and sastra. Prabhupada didn't appoint any women diksha gurus so we are treading in dangerous waters by doing so. Kirtanananda added so many new things like women sannyasis, for the sake of attracting more people, but he did it outside of ISKCON.

"From now on unless I order you do something change or in addition, go on with the usual standard way. You manufacture ideas and then I have to waste my time. I have given you everything already, there is no need for you to add anything or change anything." Letter to: Dhruvananda — Bombay 4 January, 1973 : 73-01-04

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 4th, 2011

35Locanananda dasa

Of course a woman can give diksa, but it is only permitted in situations where no male present is qualified to act as diksa guru. Has the situation in ISKCON deteriorated to that extent?

The real work of preaching Krishna consciousness can be carried out by both men and women. Women can be just as qualified or even more qualified to preach. It is a question of being conversant with the science of Krishna and of surrendering to the order of the spiritual master, of maintain one's purity and working cooperatively with others to spread this movement.

We say preaching is the essence. We don't say performing the formalities of giving diksa is the essence.

Krishna conscious solutions to practical issues are usually very simple. Whenever possible, we should quickly resolve controversies because otherwise they become divisive and distract us from the real work of spreading the glories of Lord Krishna by breaking the society of devotees into unworkable factions. Taking the example of Mother Urmila, a vaisnavi advanced in spiritual realization, she should be encouraged to preach Krishna consciousness and to enlighten devotees concerning the education of children. Her expertise in this area is sorely needed throughout the movement. When the time comes for her students to take diksa, Mother Urmila can present them to an authorized initiator who will perform the ceremony, give spiritual names, chant on the beads or in the case of second initiates, chant on the thread. By officiating in this way, the giver of diksa does not disturb the siksa relationship between Mother Urmila and her students. If Mother Urmila agrees to this arrangement, we have solved one of the many controversies that currently distract devotees from the joyful and unbridled practice of Krishna consciousness.

Comment posted by Locanananda dasa on May 7th, 2011

36Unregistered

Locanananda Dasa wrote:

Of course a woman can give diksa, but it is only permitted in situations where no male present is qualified to act as diksa guru. Has the situation in ISKCON deteriorated to that extent?

Of course a woman can give diksha? Can a woman or any woman give diksha simply because she has the ability to preach? Or is there some further requirement or prerequisite, such as in the case of Jahnava Devi?

This is an interesting proposal, Locanananda Prabhu, however it would be something new in ISKCON, as Srila Prabhupada never established it, nor did he say it should be done in the future. Do we really want to take the risk of introducing something as radical as this?? And how do we justify it in light of this clear contraindication:

“Suniti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Maharaja’s diksa-guru.” Bhag. 4.12.32 purport

It could be argued that this movement is to be spread to every town and village, thus justifying there are many situations currently where there is a need for women to give diksha. You have given a specific example where a woman could present students to a male guru who was not her husband but such a thing would be socially awkward and potentially dangerous for both of them, whether the guru was a sannyasi or grhastha.

The ONLY example of woman guru with disciples that Srila Prabhupada mentions is Jahnava Mata. It has already been shown how rare Her example is.

Where is the clear direction from Srila Prabhupada that we should do this in ISKCON?

Your servant, Sita devi dasi

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 26th, 2011

37Unregistered

I find it curious that the SAC and the GBC quote from a paper Female Saints in Gaudiya Vaishnavism written by Jagadananda Das (originally initiated by Prabhupada as Hiranyabarbha dasa)/Jan K. Brzezinski without undertaking further research into the veracity of its resources.

Devotees have assumed the disciples of Sita Thakurani, Hemalata Thakurani, Gaurangapriya, Krishnapriya and Vishnupriya and Gangamata Goswamini were diksa disciples, initiated into the Hare Krsna maha mantra however no proof has been given of such.

The third section of Jagadananda’s Female Saints paper is not often quoted. In it he gives the examples of 5 Gaudiya Vaishnava saints:

1. Pishima Goswamini- A sannyasini
2. Ma Yashoda- A sannyasini. She took sannyasa in order to give sannyasa initiation to her disciple .
3. Siddheshvari Devi, Sadhu Ma - A sannyasini.
4. Srimati Devi(51)- She dressed like a boy behaving like a cowherd boyfriend of Krsna.

5. Grijā Devi(53)- Gīrijā Devi whose son had died, left her husband to live in Vrindavana where she “smoked tobacco from a hookah”

These examples are outside our sampradaya. Here is a relevant instruction from Srila Prabhupada:

CC Adi 7.48

In the parampara system, the instructions taken from the bona fide spiritual master must also be based on revealed Vedic scriptures. One who is in the line of disciplic succession cannot manufacture his own way of behavior. There are many so-called followers of the Vaiṣṇava cult in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu who do not scrupulously follow the conclusions of the sastras, and therefore they are considered to be apa-sampradaya, which means “outside of the sampradaya.” Some of these groups are known as aula, baula, kartabhaja, neda, daravesa, sani sahajiya, sakhibheki, smarta, jata-gosani, ativadi, cudadhari and gauranga-nagai. In order to follow strictly the disciplic succession of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one should not associate with these apasampradaya communities.

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 26th, 2011

38Locanananda dasa

Thank you, Sitadasi, for your response to my comment #35. The statement, “of course a woman can give diksa,” was actually proposed “tongue in cheek” because we would not expect that there would come a time when not a single male devotee would be present somewhere in the Hare Krishna world qualified to give diksa. You may have taken the word “present” to mean present locally, but it was actually meant to mean present globally.

In the verse kiba vipra kiba nyasi sudra kene naya, the qualification to act as guru is that one must be conversant with the science of Krishna. A woman can be fully Krishna conscious and as knowledgeable as a man in the science of God.

In a letter to Vaikunthanatha prabhu and Saradia Dasi, Srila Prabhupada authorized the wife, who had been brahmana initiated, to speak the Gayatri mantra into the right ear of her husband. She was also authorized to perform the fire sacrifice.

“I am enclosing herewith your sacred thread, duly chanted on by me. Gayatri mantra is as follows:

[Sanskrit]. Ask your wife to chant this mantra and you hear it and if possible, hold a fire ceremony as you have seen during your marriage and get this sacred thread on your body. Saradia, or any twice-initiated devotee, may perform the ceremony.” (dated 4-4-71)

We may have our conception of what is permitted by the rules of vaisnava etiquette, but Srila Prabhupada revealed to us in this instruction to two of his disciples who had traveled to a remote area to open a temple that necessity sometimes requires that we adapt certain rules according to existing circumstances so that the Krishna consciousness movement might be pushed forward.

Comment posted by Locanananda dasa on May 27th, 2011

39Unregistered

I previously wrote, in error, that Prabhupada never mentions Gangamata but, in fact, he does, in the Caitanya-caritamrita Adi 8.60. Gangamata was the disciple of Haridasa Pandit Goswami, who was a disciple of Ananta Acarya, who was a disciple of Gadadhara Pandit.

As Brahma dasa has pointed out, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura wrote about exceptional cases of women taking sannyasa. Yes Prabhupada made provisions for brahmacarini asramas, although he also said it was artificial, and he did directly order Saradia (or another twice initiated devotee) to give Gayatri to her husband in Trinidad, as Locanananda Prabhu has pointed out. However Prabhupada did not establish that as a regular practice. He did not directly order women to take sannyasa or become diksha gurus. That's why it's something new. That's my point; where is his order to introduce this?

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 27th, 2011

40Unregistered

I believe it's significant that Prabhupada did not call Gangamata "Goswamini". There doesn't appear to be any information circulating about how such a title was given to women but we know Srila Prabhupada did not want to establish sannyasa for women. This is not a criticism of Gangamata or of exalted women vaishnavas.

There is a list that was presented to the GBC of a different disciplic succession beginning from Jahnava Devi to Bhaktivinoda that included 3 Goswaminis. In that list, Bipin Bihari Goswami precedes Bhaktivinoda so we know this is a different line from what Srila Prabhupada established which is as follows from Lord Caitanya:

Isvara Puri, (Nityananda, Advaita)

Lord Caitanya

Rupa, (Svarupa, Sanatana)

Raghunatha, Jiva

Krsnadasa

Narottama

Visvanatha

(Baladeva) Jagannatha

Bhaktivinoda

Gaurakisora

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

In different writings it is sometimes presented that devotees were “disciples” of a particular guru when they in fact had different diksha gurus. For example, Haridasa Das, author of a book from which information is taken about Hemalata Thakurani, says he was a disciple of Srinivasa Acarya. Another author, Krishnagopal Goswami, has said Haridasa Das was a disciple of Hemalata Thakurani, Srinivasa’s daughter. It is said that Virabhadra was a disciple of Jahnava Devi but he is also said to be a branch of Nityananda Prabhu.

Here is a comment made by an anonymous devotee:

“The SAC has taken things about the lives of Gangamata, Sita Thakarurani, etc. with obscure and incomplete reference from unauthorized sources that lack pertinent cultural and devotional details.”

Further research should have been done and presented to the devotee community BEFORE recommending a woman take on diksha disciples in ISKCON.

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 28th, 2011

41Unregistered

Locanananda Prabhu wrote:

The statement, “of course a woman can give diksa,” was actually proposed “tongue in cheek” because we would not expect that there would come a time when not a single male devotee would be present somewhere in the Hare Krishna world qualified to give diksa. You may have taken the word “present” to mean present locally, but it was actually meant to mean present globally.

I agree but the GBC said “there is a factual need for more diksa-gurus in ISKCON to accommodate the worldwide preaching” and partially based its decision to allow “qualified” women to be “put forward for approval as initiating guru” on this “factual need”.

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 28th, 2011

42Unregistered

The GBC, in 2005, accepted the philosophical conclusion of the SAC paper but stated “The implementation thereof is pending further GBC consideration.” Then in 2009 the GBC said they had given it “further consideration” and passed their resolution.

Let’s keep in mind the SAC paper was written AFTER a nomination had already taken place by a GBC EC member. It is logical to assume there was a bias present in favour of supporting the nomination.

Although the GBC EC stated they would “conduct a separate discussion about the cultural impact of this decision” they never did so, or if they did, the public was not made aware of such conclusions!

According to ISKCON Law, the mandatory qualifications of a woman diksha guru include being free from “nisiddhacara- behavior contrary to vaisnava principles”. Srila Prabhupada in CC Madhya 12.135 defines nisiddhacara as “accepting things forbidden in the sastra”.

I humbly submit that the very act of becoming diksha guru contradicts this requirement or qualification for reasons already discussed here and in the other discussion at <http://www.dandavats.com/?p=9349>

How can the GBC expect a woman diksha guru to be proficient in her knowledge and understanding of sastra (another requirement of ISKCON Law) if they cannot prove that sastra allows her to take diksha disciples in the first place?!

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 28th, 2011

43Unregistered

Brahma Dasa wrote, quoting Srila Bhaktivinoda:

“Of course there can be some exceptional rare cases when an extraordinary and greatly advanced woman in bhakti can accept the brahmacharya and sannyasa ashramas and make a success of her spiritual life. But in the normal and general case, these ashramas are not meant for women because of their delicate faith, delicate body and delicate intelligence.”

We are warned not to imitate the examples of pure devotees on the level of Haridasa Thakura, or Ramananda Raya. So why should we imitate the exceptional rare cases of women gurus, such as Jahnava Devi?!

When Prabhupada presented Jahnava Devi’s example to a professor, he did not present her being a diksha guru as an example to be followed in our movement.

He said,

“Jahnava devi was- Nityananda’s wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many.”

1. Jahnava was on the highest perfectional stage and was Nityananda’s wife thus why would she not be guru?

2. “but”, Prabhupada adds, “not so many”. In other words, this was one of those exceptional rare cases that existed (such as Haridasa Thakura or Ramananda Raya) but that we should not imitate.

In CC Adi 7: 88 Srila Prabhupada writes:

“If one who is not yet developed, imitates such symptoms artificially, he create chaos in the spiritual life of human society.”

Instituting women diksha gurus in imitation of Jahnava Devi will bring about chaos in ISKCON as much as imitation of Haridasa Thakura or Ramananda Raya would.

Comment posted by sitadasi on May 28th, 2011

44Unregistered

In reference to comment # 38.

Dear Locananda, please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. Missing your kirtans, rather I should say your sankirtans.

Excellent! It is so nice to observe or be reminded how Srila Prabhupada did things according to time and circumstances.

A long-time admirer,

PVd

Comment posted by Prabhava Vighraha das on May 28th, 2011

45Locanananda dasa

Dear Prabhava,

My obeisances unto you. All glories to His Divine Grace! You and I go back a long way. We did travelling Sankirtana together in France thirty years ago, and you were the party leader. When it came time to return to Paris, our driver, Mahabala prabhu, became quite ill and you asked me to step up and drive the vehicle. Within about ten minutes, I had an accident with a car that was making an illegal turn. The devotees were having prasadam at the time and when I slammed on the brakes to avoid a crash, everyone's prasadam went flying all over the front and back seat. I just wanted to take this opportunity to apologize for ruining everyone's prasadam experience and for damaging your van. I believe Mahabala prabhu, despite his high fever, ended up driving the rest of the way.

I'm happy to see you are still in the fire of preaching Krishna consciousness, reminding us of Srila Prabhupada's desire to see everyone in the world engaged in Krishna's service. I always found you to be a strict follower of His Divine Grace yet kind to others, just as he was.

Your servant,

Locanananda dasa

Comment posted by Locanananda dasa on May 29th, 2011

46Unregistered

Thakura Bhaktivinode wrote that in exceptional cases women can accept the brahmacharya and sannyasa ashramas. Apparently, Srila Prabhupada considered the women in his movement to be

exceptional enough to accept them in the bramacharini asrama, which he admitted was 'not Vedic'. He defended this position against all critics, particularly those who used the argument that what he had done in this case (and others) was not done by, and thus would not be acceptable to his own spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta.

The arguments on this thread are in exactly the same vane. Basically they are—Srila Prabhupada didn't do it so it can't be done. Never mind that (mentioning Jahnava devi) Srila Prabhupada specifically told the professor that women can be gurus. Never mind that Jahnava devi was a diksa guru as well as a siksa guru; and never mind that the precedent in Gaudiya Vaisnavism is in acceptance of women diksa gurus. Finally, never mind that in numerous cases Srila Prabhupada broke with tradition and established practices that were unheard of in his spiritual masters institution.

If the argument is used that Iskcon women cannot give diksa because they are not as qualified as Jahnava devi, then the same standard should be applied to Iskcon men. Are Iskcon men who give diksa as qualified as Jahnava devi?

Otherwise, no one here has presented any verse from scripture that specifically prohibits women giving diksa. There are however numerous verses stating that women can become suddha-bhaktas.

Is this not the real qualification for giving diksa? Indeed Madhya 8.128—kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya—rejects the idea that there is a material qualification for being guru. Tellingly, Prabhupada writes in the purport to this verse, "Everyone is capable of becoming a spiritual master because knowledge in Krsna consciousness is on the platform of the spirit soul." This is the real reason why Vaisnavis can give diksa—because Vaisnavism is on the platform of the spirit—not on the platform of the body.

brahma dasa

Comment posted by brahma dasa on May 29th, 2011

47Locanananda dasa

I have to say that I find Sitadasi's arguments, taken as a whole, to be an irrefutable presentation as to why women in ISKCON should not give diksa, no matter how qualified they are to give siksa. I would like to think that the GBC vote on this issue was not unanimous, and that dissenters presented strong arguments against the resolution just as Sitadasi has done here. At best, it was a controversial decision insofar as it does not appear to have been based on a direct instruction from Srila Prabhupada.

The need for gurus in ISKCON really means there is a need to increase the number of full-time preachers. Those preachers can be women or men, without distinction. Srila Prabhupada was adamant about only men entering the sannyasa order. He was also adamant about women living

under the direction of a male authority. He never appointed any woman to give diksa, either to initiate on his behalf while he was present, or to initiate disciples of her own at that time when he would no longer be physically present.

We have to be very careful not to overstep the intentions of the founder acarya. There is a tendency to overrule his instructions based on what may have been written by a previous acarya under different circumstances, or on the basis of a statement found in a scripture that Srila Prabhupada did not comment upon. We should not enact resolutions that introduce manufactured ideas as new ISKCON policy. If we consider Srila Prabhupada's statement that the spiritual master is a resident of the spiritual world, we may want to re-think the role of the initiators in our movement and the nomination and approval procedures we follow in their selection.

Comment posted by Locanananda dasa on May 29th, 2011

48Akruranatha

Brahma Das has spoken well. There is no external qualification for being a diksa guru. The only qualification is to actually have realized knowledge of the science of Krishna, to have perfect behavior in accordance with the rules and regulations of Bhakti yoga, and to come in a bona fide line of disciplic succession as a first class disciple of one's own guru.

I do not understand what being a sannyasi or being independent of male protection has to do with it. Since when does a guru have to be a sannyasi or "independent"? Clearly, a guru does not have to be a sannyasi. A guru may even be a sudra, if he knows the science of Krsna.

Now, how ISKCON should regulate the giving of diksa within the ISKCON institution may be a different matter. There may be reasons why otherwise qualified gurus might not be requested to serve as such within ISKCON. I am not sure what such reasons might be (one thing is, a guru serving in ISKCON should be committed to working in harmony with ISKCON's institutional management system as desired by Srila Prabhupada to achieve goals of ISKCON's mission, such as the wide dissemination of Srila Prabhupada's books).

I do not see any good reason why ISKCON should restrict qualified women from becoming diksa gurus in ISKCON. It does seem that Srila Prabhupada wanted all his disciples to become bona fide gurus if they could.

But it is also true that Srila Prabhupada tended to appoint male disciples to positions of authority in the organization. In the July 9th letter he appointed 11 men to perform initiations on his behalf and did not appoint any women. It seems significant, as Sita Dasi notes, that Srila Prabhupada said women could be gurus, "But, not so many."

ISKCON cannot restrict that initiating guru in ISKCON have to be as qualified as Jahnvi Ma. A number of initiating gurus are needed, and ISKCON should do what it can to insure that those who are performing that service in ISKCON are highly learned, realized, well-behaved, expert, and share a sense of ISKCON's mission. If there are women who can actually perform the service well and meet the criteria, by all

means they should be encouraged to do so. They will have to be able to preach well and establish the conclusions of Lord Caitanya against opposing arguments, and remain fixed in Krsna consciousness.

I do not agree with Brahma that we should have women sannyasis in ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada did not approve (though he allowed brahmacarinis).

Comment posted by Akruranatha on May 31st, 2011

49Unregistered

Reply to # 45

Dear Locananda, pamho and agtsp. I am almost embarassed to accept any kind of apologies from such an older Godbrother as your good self. But I appreciate the transcendental almost humorous mood. I still recall this accident, that very grey colored car which had such weird so-called flashers in the shape of little metal arms coming down to indicate in which direction it will move next.

In any case, as they say: we win as a team and we lose as a team. It is the same for our movement. There was no fault on your part. Neither did I find any. Tricks of destiny happen sometimes.

My admiration and gratefulness go back to when you were deputed by Harivilas to come down and settle the leasing for the center we were to open in Marseilles. Other than that, I still recall your playing the harmonium on Sunday nights in the (Rue Le Sueur) temple room for the last arati, singing with guests and devotees a night tune that you would prefer to use for the samsara prayers. Nice memories. Nice taste for chanting. Nice devotion. The best way to spend one's youthful years.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada and your service.

Comment posted by Prabhava Vighraha das on June 1st, 2011

50Unregistered

The "brahmacarini" asrama was a practical solution and primarily intended to keep girls and boys separate. It was not intended as a permanent asrama, but a temporary one until the women got married.

I lived in a brahmacarini asrama for several years, under the care and direction of Mother Padyavali. She concluded it would best be separate from the temple for many practical reasons, including proximity to men's living quarters, but such a project was not financially feasible.

I can personally attest that none of the women I lived with in these brahmacarini asramas, including myself, were "extraordinary and greatly advanced woman in bhakti so I disagree with Brahma Dasa that Prabhupada's reasoning behind brahmacarini asramas:

"Apparently, Srila Prabhupada considered the women in his movement to be exceptional enough to accept them in the bramacharini asrama"

It appears it was more like Bhaktivinoda was speaking of exceptional and rare case such as Gangamata who was a life-long celibate single woman greatly advanced in bhakti.

Comment posted by sitadasi on June 2nd, 2011

51Unregistered

The SAC's Paper describe Hemalata Thakurani, daughter of Srinivasa Acarya as having disciples, for example:

Yadunandana, the author of Karnananda

Rupa Kaviraja, who she later rejected

Sri Suvala (Subala) Chandra Thakura

The SAC also points out that Yadunandana states he wrote Karnananda at Hemalata's request and addresses her as his guru therein.

It is seen from other resources that the above were siksha disciples of Hemalata's, not diksha disciples.

Sukumar Sen, in A History of Brajabuli Literature, wrote that Yadunandan Das "was a disciple of Srinivasa Acharya and later become an attendant of the acarya's daughter, Hemlata Devi"

Sen also states "Yadunandan Das was the nephew of Hemlata and the disciple of Subal Chandra".

The following states that Rupa Kaviraj was a disciple of Srinivas Acarya:

"Visvanatha Cakravarti appeared during very troubled times within the Vaisnava community. In Bengal there were two heretical movements going on. One was started by Advaita's son Balaram and the other by a disciple of Srinivas Acarya, named Rupa Kaviraj. This Rupa Kaviraj was expelled from the Gaudiya community by Hemalata Thakurani, the daughter of Srinivas Acarya Prabhu. It is told how she ripped his neck beads off in a public gathering but only two of the three strands came off. There is still a class of followers of this Rupa Kaviraj who only wear one strand of neck beads. They are known as the Atibari community. " I note the Atibari is an apa-sampradaya. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/3600.....Cakravarti>

I'm not sure of the source of this last reference as it is included in a list of other biographies, but it is possibly O.B.L Kapoor

Comment posted by sitadasi on June 2nd, 2011

52Unregistered

Also in the first extract of Karnananda, Yadunandana offers his obeisances to his "spiritual master" Srinivasa Acarya.

Where is the factual proof of the SAC that their "Historical Examples of Female Gaudiya Diksha-gurus" actually gave diksha to their disciples??

Comment posted by sitadasi on June 2nd, 2011

53Unregistered

My husband, Jivan Mukta dasa, previously wrote on the topic of women diska-gurus, quoting from Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Bhaktyaloka:

"It is not the duty of materialistic persons to renounce the process of initiation because a few great souls like Jada Bharata did not take initiation.. Initiation is a constitutional injunction for every birth of the living entity. If initiation is not seen in the life of a perfected soul, it should not be taken as an example. General rules are not changed because something happens to a particular person in a special situation. Sri Dhruva Maharaja went to Dhruvaloka in his material body; seeing that, should one waste time hoping for the same? The general rule is a living entity gives up his material body and goes to Vaikuntha in his spiritual body. General rules should be accepted by people in general. Whenever and whatever is desired by the Lord, who is full of inconceivable potencies, that only happens. Therefore we should never transgress the general rules. "

Mother Jahnava accepted disciples, Draupadi accepted five husbands, Ganga murdered seven of her own children, Urvasi sought an incestuous relationship with Arjuna, and Lord Krishna danced with other men's wives. Exceptions are just that—exceptions. They do not establish the rule. The very opposite, in fact, is true: exceptions simply prove the general rules.

Comment posted by sitadasi on June 5th, 2011

54Akruranatha

General rules are not changed because there may be unusual exceptions, granted.

But what is the general rule concerning who may be accepted as a spiritual master?

As far as I have always heard from Srila Prabhupada, there is no external qualification such as birth in a specific family or social position, as long as one knows the science and is capable of delivering a disciple.

"...avaisnavo gurur na syad, vaisnavah svapaco guruh"

"...yei krsna tattva vetta sei guru haya"

"srotriam brahma nistham"

"gurur na sa syat ... na mocayed yah samupetya-mrtyam"

"etan vegan yo visaheta dhirah sarvam apimam prthivim sa sisyat"

"yare dekha tare kaha krsna upadesa amara ajnaya guru hana tara' ei desa"

All of the familiar evidences Srila Prabhupada gave regarding the qualifications of the spiritual master were not based on external qualifications regarding one's social position but, on the contrary, had to do

with one's qualities of sense control, learning, realization, ability, and commitment to the service of preaching the message as it is, without distorting it.

When asked directly about women being gurus he said they could, just as a qualified woman may be a professor.

He also said, "But... not so many." What he meant by that may be open to question but it appears to mean it is not expected that many women will actually display those qualifications (?)

But he did not ever, as far as I know, recognize a "general rule" that gurus are supposed to be male, or born in brahmana families, or in the sannyasa order of life, or are in the household order of life, or any other external qualification based on social designation or position. Being guru is a matter of knowing Krsna tattva and explaining it, of being capable of delivering a sincere disciple from the cycle of birth and death.

If anyone can do that, no matter what he is — a woman, a child, a laborer, an apparently vain, wealthy sense enjoyer (Pundarik), an apparently retarded man employed as a king's palanquin carrier (Jada Bharat), a prostitute (Cintamani)... — we should be prepared to accept such a person as guru.

Now, whether such person should be engaged as initiating guru in ISKCON may be a different question. Other considerations are involved.

However, I have not heard any considerations that convince me that qualified women should not be encouraged to accept disciples in ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada definitely did not forbid it. What is the evidence of such "general rule"?

Comment posted by Akruranatha on June 9th, 2011

55Unregistered

AKP: As far as I have always heard from Srila Prabhupada, there is no external qualification such as birth in a specific family or social position, as long as one knows the science and is capable of delivering a disciple.

A spiritual master also teaches by personal example which has to be in obedience to sastric rules and those rules are different for women than for me. Even the SAC admits:

"If women accept the role of spiritual master they should not consider that they will be socially independent. "

AKP: "However, I have not heard any considerations that convince me that qualified women should not be encouraged to accept disciples in ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada definitely did not forbid it. What is the evidence of such "general rule"?"

The Hari bhakti vilasa states that " one should not accept initiation from a person who is not in the brahminical order if there is a fit person in the brahminical order present. " (SP on HBV 1.49-52 in CC

Madhya 8.128). Also in CC Madhya 15.108, Prabhupada quotes from Hari-bhakti-vilasa 2.3-4 and the Bhakti-sandarbha 283:

“Even though born in a brahmaṇa family, one cannot engage in Vedic rituals without being initiated and having a sacred thread. Although born in a brahmana family, one becomes a brahmaṇa only after initiation and the sacred thread ceremony. Unless one is initiated as a brahmaṇa, one cannot worship the holy name properly.”

We know a vaishnava can be initiated as a brahmana even if not born in a brahmana family. Such vaishnava brahmanas receive the sacred thread and are eligible to take sannyasa. But women don't receive the sacred thread (a brahmana husband wears an extra three threads for his wife) nor do we take sannyasa. So even though a vaishnavi can be considered a brahmana on the spiritual platform and a brahmani in relation to a brahmana husband, she technically can't be a fully functional brahmana on her own. She cannot perform fire sacrifices (Manu prohibits it) so how can she give diska?! Srila Bhaktisiddhanta has written:

“The sannyasa-asrama is not suitable for women. Performing hari-bhajana while remaining at home will bestow auspiciousness upon them. In the name of giving sannyasa, bheka, and so on to women, much disturbance is present in the world. Imitation of exceptional cases is not advisable.”

Women initiator gurus will cause social problems similar to women sannyasis.

Comment posted by sitadasi on June 14th, 2011

56Unregistered

SriGopaldas Says:

June 15th, 2011 at 8:32 am

Hare Krishna. All glories to Srila Prabhupada:

Sri Namacharya Srila Haridas Thakura was also qualified during the time of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to be considered as the Acarya however he chose not to exercise that privilege rather he took the humble position. Tranad api sunicena....kirtaniya sada hari. Another reason, Srila Haridas Thakur didn't wanted to disturb the social norm by pushing himself to be one of the leaders even though he was the most qualified in Sriman Mahaprabhu's eyes. Another person is Srila Ramananda Raya, a kshatriya (supposedly) didn't try to take up the position of a leader, again, out of humility and respecting the tradition of vedic culture. Sri Rupa and Sri Sanatan, brahmanas turned into muslim then again after meeting Sriman Mahaprabhu are listed as the Acaryas of our sampradaya due to their brahmana birth. Again it is all in the line of following vedic tradition. One of the lecture given in Bombay, Srila Prabhupada said, “Vedic Culture is Krishna Culture and Krishna Culture is Vedic Culture.” However, Srila Prabhupada being the Most Merciful Personality instituted a policy of Sri Krishna that is, “sarva dharman parityajya Mam ekam saranam vraja aham tvam sarva papebhyo mokshayisyami ma sucha.” Whole of ISKCON is designed by Srila Prabhupada based on this principle only and only Sri Guru Acarya like Srila

Prabhupada can make changes to accommodate distribution of Divine Mercy and it is liking to that of a Father encouraging his young immature children or handicap child and giving special facilities as most of us do not have vedic upbringing. However, we should be careful not to take this mercy and try to disrupt the vedic tradition of the country of origin of Krishna Conscious. We should stay within our limits and understand that we are not nityasiddhas rather trying to be krpa siddhas. We are beggars for mercy then where is the question of challenging the vedic traditions and even if we try to quote Srila Prabhupada to support our position to make changes which He instituted to accommodate our shortcomings it will make the Acarya and His Divine Mercy appear non-conforming Personality to vedic teachings and label us apasampradhaya. We should show our love for our Srila Prabhupada and behave in such a way that it glorifies our Eternal Well Wisher Srila Prabhupada as the Greatest of All time in the eyes of all vedic traditionalists.

Comment posted by SriGopaldas on June 15th, 2011

57Unregistered

Srila Prabhupada (ACBSP) in one of his famous Bombay pandal lecture said, "Krishna culture means vedic culture and vedic culture means Krishna culture, there is no difference between them." For Krishna Consciousness to thrive and progress it needs vedic culture and its' cultural practices, it is this cultural etiquettes and relationships and practices that nourishes Krishna Consciousness. Without the vedic culture, Krishna Conscious is like lotus without the water and without Krishna Conscious the vedic culture is like an empty pond with weeds only. They nourish each other and are interdependent just like Supersoul and soul, mother and child, etc. You cannot separate them. This is one of the reasons no matter how much chanting and austerities a devotee practices but because he/she has not adopted the vedic culture or try to understand it, he has not made much progress. We have to understand that if we have to quote the acaryas then we must understand their intentions and moods before embarking on repeating whatever the acaryas have said. Also, it is question of authority, the acaryas are authorized to question and criticize the society's rituals and practices in the name of dharma (religion). In our Gaudiya Vaishnava line there are two Sri Gurus. One is Sri Nityananda Prabhu and other one is Srimati Radharani. Srimati Radharani is the Guru of the inner circle. In the following article, Associates of Sri Chaitanya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura has mentioned that,

"But Nityananda does not directly instruct in the confidential service of Krsna. Srimati Radhika is the guru of the inner circle of the servants of Krsna. Srimati, however, accepts the offer of service of only those souls who are specially favored by Nityananda and are deemed by Him to be fit for Her service. There is, therefore a most intimate relationship between the function of Nityananda and that of Srimati which is at once supplementary and inclusive of the former."

Srimati Radharani is Guru without Guruship meaning officially She doesn't carry the Guru title yet She is the only One Who can give Krishna. Srimati Radharani didn't personally appear as She is to preach and distribute Krishna Prema rather Sri Krishna appeared in Her mood as Sri Gouranga Mahaprabhu. All our Acaryas from Sriman Mahaprabhu are all females (Gopis/Manjaris) yet they all appear in male form. Reason. Vedic tradition.

Comment posted by SriGopaldas on June 15th, 2011

58Akruranatha

Sitadasi: "Women initiator gurus will cause social problems similar to women sannyasis."

This raises an issue touched on by Krishna-kirti Prabhu and others in some of these threads, about whether social consequences matter. I think we all agree that the goal of our efforts and discussions should be how to please Lord Krishna, and certainly we know that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed according to caste divisions and orders of life is to please the Personality of Godhead. (S.B. 1.2.13)

However, Krishna will be pleased by our organizing society in such a way that peace, justice, prosperity and cultivation of religious values of tolerance and humility and love of spiritual knowledge and so on will prevail. Consequences matter. Social problems should be avoided. Only a fool adheres strictly to rules without considering the purposes behind them and whether those purposes are really being achieved. "We judge by the results."

Sometimes the defenders of practices that inflict suffering on different social groups such as women or ethnic minorities use half-understood rules from religious scriptures to justify what to less indoctrinated observers seem like obvious injustices.

Right now in Europe and increasingly in the U.S. there is a growing clash of civilizations between a fundamentalist, obscurantist Islam that seems frozen in the Middle Ages, and a process-oriented western liberalism which abstains from having positive views about higher spiritual ideals and beliefs, but insists on fundamental fairness and respect for a basic dignity and equal treatment under the law of all adult humans, and espouses the values of the 18th century "Enlightenment" which tend to favor material progress through empirical science and individual liberty.

The Krishna consciousness movement is not strictly aligned with either side in that debate. While we admire the belief in a personal God whose orders must be obeyed — who demands sense control, austerity, and detachment from materialism embodied in the four pillars of sin, namely meat-eating, intoxication, illicit sex and gambling — we are not an unenlightened, authoritarian, dogmatic, fear-based disciplinary tradition. We can compete in the marketplace of ideas because we offer positive answers that appeal to those of good intellect.

And intelligent people are concerned with promoting good social consequences, and avoiding negative ones.

Comment posted by Akruranatha on June 20th, 2011

59Unregistered

The SAC paper cites the following as positive evidence for women to intiate:

Hari-bhakti-vilasa (1.211)

quotes from Kularnava-tantra (15.97):

svapna-labdhe striya datte

mala-mantre ca try-aksare

ekaksare tatha mantre

siddhadin naiva sodhayet

“One should not test a mantra attained in a dream, a mantra given by a woman, a mala-mantra [mantra over 20 syllables] or mantras of one or three syllables for siddha and so on.”

The translation of this verse is questionable as it contradicts other sources that state a mantra obtained in a dream or from a woman need to be purified. For example:

“Also, mantra obtained in a dream or through a lady can be accepted only after performing mantra samskara due to the lack of sakshadacharyatva in the case of a lady.” swapnalabdham striya dattam samskarenaiva shuddhyati [Yogini Tantra]

“When obtained in a dream and when given by a woman [the mantra initiation] should be purified through a consecration ceremony.” svapna- labdhe striya datte samskarepaiva suddhyati Rudrayamala (Uttara Tantra)

The SAC writes with regards to their Kularnava-tantra quote:

“This verse points to the fact that, in the past, women sometimes gave mantras. One could then assume that women, on occasion, had acted as diksa-gurus.”

The mantras given by women, referred to in the Tantras, were part of tantric initiations, not vaisnava initiations.

Comment posted by sitadasi on June 22nd, 2011

60Unregistered

just a correction to a typo in the quote from Rudrayamala in my previous text which should have read...

”svapna-labdhe striya datte

samskarenaiva suddhyati”

note- this Sanskrit verse is identical to the reference from Yogini Tantra. The first line, svapna-labdhe striya date is identical to the Kularnava Tantra quoted by Sanatana Goswami in Hari bhakti vilasa.

Comment posted by sitadasi on June 30th, 2011

61Unregistered

From the SAC Paper's "Historical Examples of Female Gaudiya Diksa-gurus

"Sita Thakurani—The wife of Advaita Prabhu. According to the Prema-vilasa (vilasa 24) of Nityananda Dasa, Sita Thakurani gave diksa (krsna-mantra) to her two servants Nandini and Jangali. The vaikuntha-svarupas of Nandini and Jangali are the well-known gatekeepers Jaya and Vijaya (Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika text 89). Their discipleship to Sitadevi, along with other interesting facts, is corroborated in the well-known and respected compilation named Gaudiya-vaisnava abhidhana and in the Sita-caritra by Lokanatha Dasa. "

I would like to comment on the above in 3 parts:

1. "Sita Thakurani—The wife of Advaita Prabhu. According to the Prema-vilasa (vilasa 24) of Nityananda Dasa, Sita Thakurani gave diksa (krsna-mantra) to her two servants Nandini and Jangali. "

I could not find this reference to Nandini and Jangali in my copy of the Prema Vilasa. My copy contains only 20 chapters. It has been said by some, including Rebecca Manring (Reconstructing Tradition), that the later chapters, particularly 21-25 of PV are more recent additions. It is from chapter 24 that much of the information about Jangali and Nandini has been gathered. Even Jagadananda, who quotes from Prema Vilasa to support women diksha gurus, states that the PV is a "controversial" book because parts of it contain discrepancies and thus "has been almost completely discredited" by many scholars (see Authenticity of the Caitanya Caritamrita Maha Kavya).

Nandini and Janjali were originally men (Nandarama and Yajnesvara) but Sita Thakurani refused to teach them due to social customs against women instructing men. As the story goes, they changed to women so as to become Sita's students. It is said that Sita gave them instruction in the Radha and Guru Gayatri, Caitanya Gayatri and Kama Gayatri mantras but I have not seen that she gave them Maha Mantra in a formal initiation. In fact, one source says that Advaita Acarya initiated Jangali and Nandini (Haricarana Advaita Mangala).

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 8th, 2011

62Unregistered

comments on SAC Paper's "Historical Examples of Female Gaudiya Diksa-gurus continued...

2. "The vaikuntha-svarupas of Nandini and Jangali are the well-known gatekeepers Jaya and Vijaya (Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika text 89)."

We know from Srila Prabhupada that Jaya and Vijaya were Jagai and Madhai:

"In the Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika (115) it is said that the two brothers Jagai and Madhai were formerly the doorkeepers named Jaya and Vijaya, who later became Hiranyaksa and Hiranyakasipu." (CC Adi 10.120)

The GGD does mention both so it's a mystery how Jaya and Vijaya can be both Nandini and Jangali as well as Jagai and Madhai at the same time.

3. "Their discipleship to Sitadevi, along with other interesting facts, is corroborated in the well-known and respected compilation named Gaudiya-vaisnava abhidhana and in the Sita-caritra by Lokanatha Dasa. "

Prabhupada does not mention either of these books, neither of which are easily accessible in English. In Sita Caritra, Lokanatha Goswami allegedly claims that Nandini and Jangali were sakhibhavas aka sakhibhekhis which we know to be an apa sampradaya.

Prabhupada does not present Sita Thakurani as a diksa-guru or an Acarya herself. We know Sita is the wife of Advaita Acarya, who is non different from Krsna, but she is not mentioned as one of his branches.

Why is our "Sastric Advisory Committee" referring to obscure and unauthorized sources which contradict Srila Prabhupada? Why are they not basing their conclusions strictly on Prabhupada's books?!

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 8th, 2011

63Unregistered

from Prema Vilasa Chapter 4

"Nityananda sent Jagadananda prabhu to Nilacala with that tarja. Prabhu took it as true and to help Nityananda in his preaching mission sent Ramdasa and Sundaranandana and others to assist him. He sent Kamdeva, Nagara, Nandini and some others to Advaita. But Nagara became envious of Advaita and began to proclaim that it was he who had accompanied Prabhu from Gauda and that he was the main assistant of Mahaprabhu in his preaching program. Hearing these proud words, Sita devi, the wife of Advaita, rejected Nagara, Kamdeva, Nandini, etc. from the group of Advaita's disciples. "

Question: is this the same Nandini?

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 8th, 2011

64Unregistered

from SAC Paper....

Gauranga-priya Devi – The second wife and disciple of Srinivasa Acarya (Gaudiya-vaisnava abhidhana pg. 1224) She was from a Cakravarti brahmana family, her father being Raghunatha Cakravarti, a resident of West Gopalapura. She initiated a number of disciples, one being Gurucarana Dasa, who wrote a book at her behest called Premamrta which is based on the Prema-vilasa (Gaudiya-vaisnava abhidhana pg. 1203).

"Srinivasa Acarya's first wife, Srimati Isvari Thakurani, was a highly devotional lady. Gauranga-priya, his second wife, also possessed exalted devotional qualities. In due course of time many persons became disciples of Srinivasa Acarya and his wives."(Karnananda, ch.2)

First of all, who has authorized us to read these books? Not Srila Prabhupada.

Jagadananda, who quotes from Karnananda to support women diksa gurus, says the following about it:

“Another title, Karnananda, written by Yadunandana, the grand-disciple of the above- mentioned Srinivasa, is said by the author to have been written in 1529 Saka, i.e. AD 1607. This is disproved by the great number of quotations from the Chaitanya- charitamrita, the date of which seems to have been established beyond any doubt.” (Authenticity of the Caitanya Caritamrita Maha Kavya)

Jagad calls Yadunandana a “grand-disciple” of Srinivasa but no proof has been given that he took diksa from Hemalata.

If dates have been disproven by the authorized Caitanya Caritamrita, then how can we trust this source?

The SAC gives the conclusion that Gauranga-priya “initiated a number of disciples”, without citing the exact reference. They also state:

“many persons became disciples of Srinivasa Acarya and his wives”

Is this a case of Gauranga-priya being the wife of an Acarya, assisting her husband by preaching to his disciples (siksa)? Whose diksa disciples were they?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta warned about reading apa granthas. How do we know these books being quoted by the SAC are bonafide? It’s safe to say they are not bonafide, based on the simple fact that Prabhupada doesn’t refer to them. It may be that some of the material is correct but if it is mixed with other incorrect material it becomes tainted.

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 8th, 2011

65Unregistered

CC Adi Lila 12.59

Nandini, Kamadeva, Caitanya dasa, Durlabha Visvasa and Vanamali dasa were the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth branches of Sri Advaita Acarya.

Were these the same Nandini and Kamadeva that, according to Nityananda Dasa in Prema-vilasa, Sita devi rejected from the group of Advaita’s disciples?

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 9th, 2011

66Unregistered

From the SAC re. Jahnava Devi:

1. Jahnava Thakurani - The wife of Nityananda Prabhu. Jahnava Thakurani became one of the greatest leaders of our tradition in its second generation. Virabhadra and Ramacandra, the sons (biological and

adopted respectively) of Nityananda Prabhu, were two of the most famous among her initiated disciples.

2. "Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura writes in his Anubhanya, 'Virabhadra Gosaii was the direct son of Srila Nityananda Prabhu and a disciple of Jahnava Devi.'" (Caitanya-caritamrta Adi-lila 11.8 purport)

3. "Yadunandana Acarya's wife, Laksmi, was a very humble and submissive lady. She had two beautiful daughters named Srimati and Narayani. By the arrangement of Sri Isvari (Jahnava Devi), these two girls became the fortunate wives of Viracandra Prabhu. On the day of the wedding, Yadunandana took initiation from Viracandra, and Sri Jahnava happily accepted Srimati and Narayani as her disciples." (Bhakti-ratnakara, ch. 13)

4. She is also confirmed as a diksa-guru both in the Gaudiya-vaisnava abhidhana (pg. 1246-47) and in the Prema-vilasa of Nityananda Dasa (vilasas 15 & 20)."

Comments:

1. Where does this information come from, that Virabhadra and Ramacandra were initiated disciples of Jahnava Devi?

2. Being a disciple of Jahnava Devi does not necessarily mean she gave diksa. She is the wife of Lord Nityananda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and her followers " are counted within the list of Sri Nityananda Prabhu's devotees." (CC. Adi 11.21), this includes Virabhadra, Nityananda dasa and Jnana Dasa. Ramacandra is said to be the disciple of Virabhadra (see CC Adi 11.8).

There is a reference from Rebecca Manring stating that "Jahnava did not routinely bestow mantra (or any other) initiation" because, according to Isana dasa in Advaita Prakasa, Jahnava "sends for a holy man to perform the initiation" (Reconstructing Tradition).

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 9th, 2011

67Unregistered

Comments on the SAC Paper cont...

3. "Yadunandana Acarya's wife, Laksmi, was a very humble and submissive lady. She had two beautiful daughters named Srimati and Narayani. By the arrangement of Sri Isvari (Jahnava Devi), these two girls became the fortunate wives of Viracandra Prabhu. On the day of the wedding, Yadunandana took initiation from Viracandra, and Sri Jahnava happily accepted Srimati and Narayani as her disciples." (Bhakti-ratnakara, ch. 13)

4. She is also confirmed as a diksa-guru both in the Gaudiya-vaisnava abhidhana (pg. 1246-47) and in the Prema-vilasa of Nityananda Dasa (vilasas 15 & 20)."

3. Yadunandana took initiation from Virabhadra on the day of Virabhadra married Srimati and Narayani and on the wedding day, he initiated their father, Yadunandana. It does not say, however, that Jahnava initiated Srimati and Narayani.

4. Again, as Srila Prabhupada tells us, Jahnava's followers "are counted within the list of Sri Nityananda Prabhu's devotees". Jahnava-devi was accepted as acarya, "but she did not declare". She is a representative of her husband, the "original spiritual master", Lord Nityananda and she continued his legacy after his departure from this world.

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 9th, 2011

68Unregistered

In Text 66 I gave a reference from Rebecca Manring. This was made with respect to Virabhadra:

"After the funeral celebrations Advaita takes his group back to Shantipur. He is noticeably depressed, as is the rest of the community, after the loss of two of their leaders. Caitanya's mother and wife have gone into such deep seclusion that no one ever sees more than their feet.

Soon afterward Advaita learns that Nityananda's son Virabhadra is on his way to him, hoping to receive mantra initiation. Advaita refuses, saying he must be initiated by his own people, and sends him back to his mother Jahnava. Jahnava hears this and sends for a holy man to perform the initiation. This is curious, because back in chapter 15 we saw Sita confer initiation, and yet Jahnava, who on the surface seems to be her social and sectarian equivalent, cannot or perhaps will not. Isana thus suggest that Jahnava did not routinely bestow mantra (or any other) initiation, and Sita then remains (at least by implication) the only woman in the movement, at least in its second generation to do so."

(Reconstructing Tradition p .188) (Manring's note: This is probably not an accurate representation. Nityananda's school presents Jahnava in the same way that Advaita's presents Sita after their respective husbands' deaths)

Again, Srila Prabhupada has instructed us that the followers of Jahnava " are counted within the list of Sri Nityananda Prabhu's devotees". We are not Sakta worshippers after all.

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 10th, 2011

69Unregistered

The SAC writes, quoting SB 6.18.42:

"A woman's nature has been particularly well studied by Kasyapa Muni. Women are self-interested by nature, and therefore they should be protected by all means so that their natural inclination to be too self-interested will not be manifested. Women need to be protected by men. A woman should be cared for by her father in her childhood, by her husband in her youth and by her grown sons in her old age. This is the injunction of Manu, who says that a woman should not be given independence at any stage. Women must be cared for so that they will not be free to manifest their natural tendency for gross

selfishness. There have been many cases, even in the present day, in which women have killed their husbands to take advantage of their insurance policies. This is not a criticism of women but a practical study of their nature.”

The SAC’s comments on the above:

“Women on the bodily platform are selfish and should therefore be protected not only from lusty male predators but from their own lower natures as well. This is clear. The rest of the purport below, however, makes an important distinction.

“Such natural instincts of a woman or a man are manifested only in the bodily conception of life. When either a man or a woman is advanced in spiritual consciousness, the bodily conception of life practically vanishes.”

(Bhag. 6.18.42 purport)

It is shocking that the SAC state “The rest of the purport below, however, makes an important distinction”, yet they only give PART of the rest of the purport, omitting an entire paragraph and the following very important conclusion:

“A man should be trained to be a first-class devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and a woman should be trained to be a very chaste follower of her husband. That will make the lives of both of them happy.”

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 13th, 2011

70Unregistered

continued...

By omitting Srila Prabhupada’s conclusion, the SAC arrives at a faulty conclusion based on an incomplete understanding of his purport:

“When the bodily concept of life vanishes, the material qualities of one’s lower nature are transcended. The conclusion must be, therefore, that if a female devotee is actually advanced, above the bodily platform, she may assume the post of a spiritual master.”

Srila Prabhupada never presented the conclusion that a woman can assume the post of initiating spiritual master. The occupational duty of a woman, her stri dharma, is always in relation her husband and family. If her husband is a brahmana, she is a brahmani, not otherwise. Through her prescribed service she becomes Krsna conscious. It is not material if it is done for Krsna. This is stated in numerous places in the Gita.

If a woman stops serving her husband, neglects her womanly occupational duty and imitates a brahmana man’s occupational duty, Krsna will not be pleased and the woman will not be Krsna conscious. The same can be said of a husband who neglects his duty. We have seen in the past, men

who gave up being grhastha and took sannyasa, abandoning their young wives and children. This was irresponsible and socially disruptive and in many case, the men fell down from sannyasa.

As we learn from Bhagavad-gita 3.20:

“Even kings like Janaka and others attained the perfectional stage by performance of prescribed duties. Therefore, just for the sake of educating the people in general, you should perform your work.”

By allowing women to work as initiating spiritual masters, representatives of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we will be wrongly educating the people in general. The only female acarya Prabhupada mentions is Jahnava Devi however she was the wife of the Supreme Personality of Godhead! We cannot allow women to imitate her position (without being wives of Acaryas) because it defies Vaishnava scripture and Vaishnava tradition.

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 13th, 2011

71Unregistered

The SAC continues:

““Here is a suggestion in relation to the above point: The bodily concept of life is transcended, along with the modes of nature, at the stage of bhava-bhakti. But at the level of nishtha the residual anarthas are only remnants that not longer obstruct one’s progress (See Madhurya-kadambini, chapter 4). Therefore, we recommend that at least the symptoms of nishtha should be seen in diksa-guru candidates, whether male or female.”

A woman, even if on the level of nishtha, is never advised to give up her occupational duty. She continues to identify herself in relation to her husband whose social position she doesn’t overstep.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura sings:

namasraya kari’ yatane tumi, thakaha apana kaje.

“Everyone is thus advised to seek shelter in the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra and remain engaged in his own occupational duty.” SB 10.6.3

“Take shelter of hari-nama and remain in your own profession.” Jan 20/77 conversation

“In whatever occupation you are, remain there. There is no need of changing.” RC Varnasrama System Must Be Introduced — February 14, 1977, Mayapura

The conclusion of the SAC, “that if a female devotee is actually advanced, above the bodily platform, she may assume the post of a spiritual master” should have been “that if a female devotee is actually advanced, above the bodily platform, she may assume the post of initiating spiritual master”. But they cannot make that claim. They want us to think that because there is ample evidence that a woman (or child) can be siksa guru therefore she can be diksa guru.

Comment posted by sitadasi on July 13th, 2011