

A Modest Proposal For Purifying ISKCON

by Satsvarupa das Goswami

Dear Prabhus,

It is a fact, according to scripture, that almost none of Srila Prabhupada's disciples exactly live up to the qualifications for the varnas of sannyasa, brahmana, brahmacari, or grhastha, although we are filling these posts. Following in the footsteps of the renowned compiler, Subhananda das-- who recently compiled evidence demonstrating that a maha bhagavata is so rare and exalted that none of our initiating gurus fit the bill!--I have compiled evidence that our men are also failing in qualifications for brahmacari, sannyasa, etc.

My modest proposal: Those who advocate that ISKCON initiating gurus give up their big seats, big titles, and guru-puja, should in turn give up their own acoutramaunts (?) shamelessly held despite lack of qualification. Please examine your conscience: If you do not fulfill all the requirements for sannyasa as stated in the sastra and Bhaktivedanta purports, then why not in good faith give away your saffron dhoti, danda, and the vainglorious titles "Maharaja" and "His Holiness." Surely you can discharge your devotional activities without these proud items of paraphernalia. Remember, pride goeth before the fall.

Similarly, if you honestly admit after reading the qualifications for brahmana that you are not a pacca brahmana according to sastra, then please consider giving in your

brahmana thread and Gayatri mantra. ("Gayatri mantra is meant for spiritually advanced people. When one is successful in chanting the Gayatri mantra, he can enter into the transcendental position of the Lord. One must therefore acquire brahminical qualities or be perfectly situated in the quality of goodness in order to chant the Gayatri mantra....")

Brahmacaris who honestly see they cannot measure up to the scriptural requirements for brahmacari would more honestly refer to themselves as "bachelors" or "singles." Thus they need not falsely don the saffron garments in pretense of being sadhus. There is no use pretending to be something you are not. Better honestly face the facts.

As for the grhasthas, this is admittedly a touchypoint, but the fact is that some of our grhasthas may not be living up to the standard according to the qualifications for grhasthas found in the scriptures. If this is the case, then in honesty one should admit he is a grhamedhi and be done with living a lie. In fact, "das adhikary" refers to a highly advanced soul. If you are not truly "das adhikary" then better husband and wife call each other by their grhamedhi names, Fred and Mary, Bob and Ethel, or whatever the case may be. It would be a relief to all concerned if we dropped the pretense of wearing white dhotis and saris, behaving as if we were sanctified couples!

Now if the gurus will get off their vyasasanas and stop accepting worship as if they were as good as God, and if the

sannyasis will give up their sticks and Holiness, and if the brahma bandhus will admit--if it is a fact--that they are in some ways more like sudras, and if the brahmacaris will either take to wearing bark or admit to being ordinary unmarried men, and if the householders will assume their more normal position as honest American families--then WHAT A NONSENSE ORGANIZATION WE WILL BECOME.

NOTE TO A MODEST PROPOSAL

1. As Srila Prabhupada introduced the system of brahmana, sannyasa, brahmacari, and grhastha, and watched us proved or disapproved, so he himself demonstrated how a spiritual master conducts himself in his worship by his disciples. Prabhupada's advice was, "Do as I do." Srila Prabhupada's demonstration of acceptance of the vyasasana and guru-puja is our only authentic model for how our spiritual master conducts his affairs. Abandon this and you are simply speculating.

2. Moreover, in 1978 the G.B.C. with all deliberation and consultation introduced the system of guru worship and its relationship to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, and so it has been introduced all over ISKCON. It was only with a mighty unified effort of the G.B.C. that we defeated envious elements in our society who in 1978 tried to destroy the faith in guru parampara. Remember Yasodanandana Swami?

3. To radically change the system demonstrated by Srila Prabhupada and voted into practice by the G.B.C., or to make a policy of yata mata tat pat--"For each man his own way"-- will make for different philosophical movements within ISKCON. It will be similar to the different sects formed within Protestantism by groups who disagree on forms of baptism or minor items of philosophy. Let us not make a mockery of the G.B.C. by swinging back and forth like a pendulum.

4. And since we are quoting, don't forget the statement of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati.

All the audience have accepted ordinary seats, I alone have been provided with a lofty seat. All are being told in effect-- "Do have a look at a big animal from the zoo gardens. What arrogance! So foolish! So wicked! Have you ever seen such a big brute? Garlands of flowers have been put round his neck! What laudations! What bombastic long-drawn, and hyperbolic agitives! And how complacently too he is listening to the praise of his own achievements, how intently, and with his own ears! He also evidently feels delighted in mind! Is he not acting in plain violation of the teaching of Mahaprabhu? Can such a big brute, so selfish and insolent, be ever reclaimed from brutishness?"

...While the guru is instructing his disciple in the eleventh Skandha of the Bhagavatam what a great sin, in their opinion, is he not perpetuating! What is the acarya to do when he has to explain the sloka acaryam mam vijaniyan: "Never disregard the acarya; never entertain the idea that the acarya is your equal in any sense." These are the words of Sri Krsna Himself by which the jiva is to be benefited. Is the guru to take himself off, to desert his seat--the seat of the acarya--from which these words are to be explained? That office his Gurudeva has conferred on him. (Underlining by the editor) ...He has to do it in spite of the fact that such procedure is apparently open to the charge of egotism. Guru imparts the mantra to the disciple should he not tell him by this mantra to worship the guru? Should he say instead,

"Give the guru a few strokes of the shoe or the horsewhip?" The guru is never to be decried. The guru is the abode of all the gods. Should the Gurudeva abstain from communicating these words to his disciple while reading the Bhagavatam to him?...The guru is to be worshiped in a particular way. Is the guru to desert his seat without telling all these things to the disciple?

As the saying goes, "Having started on the dance it is no use to draw close the veil." I am doing the duty of the guru, but if I preach that no one should shout jai to me, that is to say if I say it in a roundabout way sing jai to me it would be nothing short of duplicity. Our Gurudeva has not taught us such insincerity.

5. A personal, subjective note: When I mentioned to Gita-nagari temple president, Paramananda das, that some devotees felt that Prabhupada would not like to see his disciple being worshiped as guru at the same time that Prabhupada was being worshiped, Paramananda replied, "What? I think Prabhupada would love to see it! That's what I think every morning."

Your servant,

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