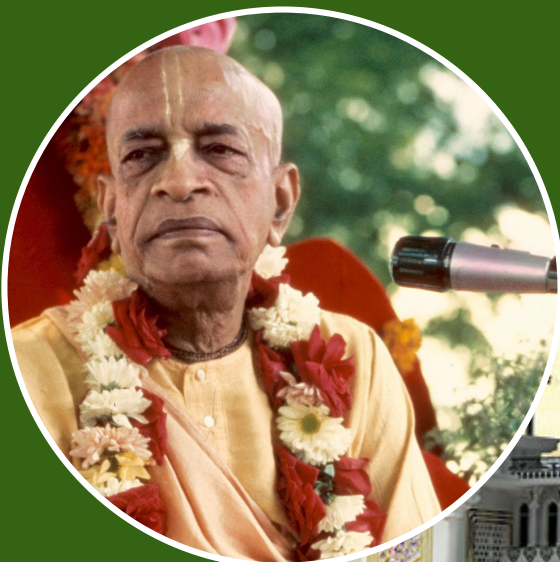


RESTORATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL CULTURE

Author: Tirtha-pavana das
Revised by: Vasusrestha das

Mayapur Bhaktivedanta Institute

Human life is made for inquiring about the Absolute Truth



In service to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada,
Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna consciousness

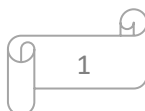
Māyāpur Bhaktivedanta Institute

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Restoration of the educational culture

In service to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupāda, Founder-Acarya of
the International Society for Kṛṣṇa consciousness



About the author

Tirtha-pavana das has been serving as a coordinator of vaisnava education in Russia since 2013 till 2023. Under his supervision in the field of education there were more than 100 communities and temples in Russia, as well as more than 20 Bhakti-sastri and Bhakti-vaibhava centers in Russia, as well as GBC college and all other GBC authorized courses for the leaders in Russian hemisphere, as well as teacher training (for example, more than 100 teachers just of the IDC course) in Russia, as well as development and implementation of courses for the 1-st initiation in Russia, as well as coordination of online school with about 300-500 students in it each year, as well as cooperation with other private educational initiatives in ISKCON Russia.

Epigraph



*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

«One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa favorably and without desire for material profit or gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service» (Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu 1.1.11, quoted in Bhagavad-gita 7.16).

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Introduction



While writing this book, the author transitioned from unconscious incompetence regarding the subject at hand to conscious incompetence. In other words, previously I thought that I understood the science of education, but now I see the absolute superficiality of my proficiency in this profoundly spiritual subject of transforming a living being from materially conditioned state to liberated state in the service to Krishna.

Therefore, this study can serve as an "entree" before the taste of the creations of those holy personalities who managed to apply this knowledge in practice. And above all others, it refers us to the study the legacy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Founder-Acharya of our society, who gave us all essentials through his books, lectures, and letters, as well as through the example of his own conduct.

One may ask what the point of this book is. Śrīla Prabhupāda would often talk about the same subject on many different occasions and add some important nuances to understand the subject. Many devotees may find it difficult to find these quotes and assemble them into a coherent body. Therefore, the purpose of this book is to systematize some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings on education in a thematic way to better understand his view on the structure of education in our society. Although during the process of writing this book the author, inspired by the desire to better understand the meaning of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings, reviewed the teachings of previous Acharyas as well, but only Śrīla Prabhupāda's quotes had been chosen to establish the culture of accepting our Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition through the prism of his vision in the minds of devotees. Also, in the references of the origin of the quotes, the reader will not find the word "purport". While it would be more accurate to indicate whether the quote is from a verse or a purport on a verse, within the scope of this book the author would like to reinforce the importance of the position of Śrīla Prabhupada, whose purport is not different from his translation of the original shastra verses in its significance.

On the one hand, in this study we would try to offer a completely different view on the education from the one that is prevalent in the community of devotees today. On the other hand, one will hardly find anything absolutely new or revolutionary in this book; and the author sometimes felt that he'd been writing a simple essay on Bhakti Shastri course, since the subject matter focuses on the essentials of spiritual education, which are at the same time its foundations. On the contrary,

the author hopes that a reader will not find anything new in this book and that all the knowledge presented here is only a systematic presentation of Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision. Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions in his letter dated November 15, 1975, was the meditation throughout this work:

«The process is that you should memorize the purports of my books and then speak them in your own words. Do not adulterate or change anything. Then you will be the perfect preacher. You should also distribute our books as far as possible. If you do this sincerely, then you will be successful.».

As well as meditation on the example of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who always acted in this manner:

«Sometimes people, they say, "Swamiji, you have done wonderful." But what wonderful? I am not a magician. My only credit is I have not spoiled the Bhagavad-gītā. I have presented as it is. Therefore it is successful» (Lecture, 27 November, 1972).

My hope is that this book would help to provide a broader understanding of it, which may radically and permanently change our approach to the educational process despite being seemingly simple and familiar. It is the mistakes in the principles of education, in the foundation of the entire educational institution, that create gaps in the entire structure of this "building" and it cannot be repaired without rebuilding its foundation. Many of the topics discussed in this book may seem obvious but if we take a step back and look at ISKCON objectively, in practice we can see deviations from some important principles in our society; and they undermine the very basis of the process of spiritual education. There are many mistakes made in the educational process, and, unfortunately, for every error described the author sees specific examples of active devotees with a considerable experience in Krishna consciousness who violate one or another aspect of the principles of spiritual training in their activities right now. Frankly speaking, the author himself is often negligent and resource-constrained in his service, and he himself commits a number of violations of the principles that he has listed himself.

Thus, we may say that during the discussion of the principles of spiritual growth we will restore the "picture" of education left by Śrīla Prabhupāda, but which over time has been subjected to various influences and the original vision has lost its former clarity and, in some places, it has become covered by speculations and elements of atheism or impersonalism which are alien to bhakti.

Being well aware of the limited depth of my realizations, I would not have dared to undertake this task, and would have left it to many more elevated and experienced Vaishnavas in our society; but education in ISKCON already exists and always develops, and no work has been written about the way it should be and which direction to move. Therefore, many devotees, teachers, preachers, mentors, community, and project leaders are trying to the best of their abilities to answer various questions about what spiritual education should be and to create a culture and a system in accordance with that understanding. I hope that this book, though claiming to be objective, will become a means to help them in this difficult task. And it will give devotees who have not yet

accepted responsibility for others, a better understanding of how to organize their own lives to develop successfully in Krishna consciousness.

You will also have to forgive me for mistakes in English language as it is not my mother tongue. This book was originally written in Russian language. And although I and one professional devotee translator tried to convert it into English language the best way we could, I understand, that some of the meaning might have been distorted. So if while reading this book you agree with most of the things written here, but find some sentence that looks odd and doesn't make sense, please consider it to be a mistake in the translation.

Review

By Vasushreshtha Das (head of the Mayapur Bhaktivedanta Institute and Russian Bhaktivedanta Institute)

This book is a pioneering study of the principles of Vaishnava education, carried out exclusively in the context of realizing the practice of pure devotional service as described in the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda (The Nectar of Devotion) and Rupa Gosvami (Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu). For the first time, the essence of the educational process is reduced to the realization of devotional service to Krishna as the only way to learn the Truth, in relation to which all kinds of other cognitive methods are defined as "quasi-spiritual education". Based on the teachings of ISKCON Founder Śrīla Prabhupāda, a new paradigm of the educational system is convincingly presented, and it covers not only the study of the Scriptures but also all the other angas of pure devotional service as directed by Rūpa Gosvāmī as a means of realizing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Accordingly, Śrīla Prabhupāda's Nectar of Devotion becomes the main textbook of the proposed educational system, the idea of the educational process is maximized to "our entire life," and the customary prejudice to "consider education only lessons in the classroom" is declared a sign of insufficiently accurate and complete conceptions of the ultimate goal of true spiritual education "in terms of the world view, practice, and the ultimate goal of our society" (sambandha, abhidheyā and prayojana) as the principle of spirituality. On the other hand, the author offers a convincing rationale for the necessity of deep study of the Scriptures to form a perfect "worldview, activity and inner worldview" as a necessary condition for the practice of pure devotional service (shravanam-kirtanam-smaranam as "spiritual technology" of personal transformation, spiritual techniques) as the principle of practicality.

Expansion of the scale of the new educational paradigm "from the beginning of life" to the full "life evolutionary cycle" is realized through the principle of continuity by "variety of educational practices" of pure devotional service (all kinds of combinations of all prescribed forms of archana-marga and bhagavata-marga in daily life based on personal philosophical attitude of yukta-vairagya or "karma-yoga in Krishna consciousness"). It significantly enhances the scientific and practical potential of the proposed innovative educational paradigm by a detailed and conscientious analysis of the process of the direct implementation of a new system of Vaishnava education in the modern social reality based on the principle of authority (based on the downward process of knowledge at all stages of the educational process - avaroha-pantha), which in turn is supported by the justification and implementation of the principle of taking a living guidance (based on qualified knowledge of manifestation of Guru-tattva). Finally, the study claims to universally formulate basic laws of education in principle, introducing new dimensions of knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead through principles of systematicity (global combination and interaction of different stages of "spiritual" and "material" education throughout human life), individualization (analysis of

interdependence of professional/"material" inclinations of each individual and their level of consciousness, taking into account time-place-circumstances in the whole social structure of "inner" and "outer" society).

The research is extremely relevant to modern positive processes of improvement of ISKCON's social infrastructure, it is distinguished by the author's high competence of thinking, a bright talent in systematization of ISKCON's founder-acharya Śrīla Prabhupāda's message in accordance with the nowadays challenges.



Spirituality of Education

Purpose of Education in Different Cultures



Education in various countries, cultures, and civilizations always aimed at the well-being of individuals and societies they live in. All Western intellectuals, from Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Democritus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle to modern scholars speak of education as a process that should lead to the well-being of a person and a society in its various aspects. For example, in Russia nowadays education is

perceived as follows: "Education is a comprehensive, purposeful process of upbringing and education, and a socially significant benefit that is carried out in the interests of an individual, family, society, and the state..." (Federal Law "Education in the Russian Federation").

And if to look only at the external definition rather than at the essence, the goal would indeed seem to be the right one. But the first question worth asking in connection with this goal is: what does "wellbeing" mean? What did each of the ideologists in didactics (educational theory) include in that term? "Well-being" is an extremely vague, general, and external definition, which can have completely different meanings. In fact, as Bhagavad-gita explains, the gunas of nature can pollute one's mind and intelligence to such an extent that one will regard "well-being" that is not well-being at all:

«O son of Pṛthā, that understanding by which one knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what is binding and what is liberating, is in the mode of goodness. O son of Pṛthā, that understanding which cannot distinguish between religion and irreligion, between action that should be done and action that should not be done, is in the mode of passion. That understanding which considers irreligion to be religion and religion to be irreligion, under the spell of illusion and darkness, and strives

always in the wrong direction, O Pārtha, is in the mode of ignorance» (Bhagavad-gita, 18.30-32).

Often, and it is very visible now, Godlessness has been promoted as the highest value under the concept of well-being. Not in the sense of open and militant atheism but, for example, an understanding of well-being as perception of the world by rejecting the concept of the "mythical" force that governs everything. Such people do not understand that the laws of science, which scientists try to comprehend, must also be created by someone; and therefore, for them science and spirituality are at the opposite ends of the same coordinate system. After all, (according to the perception of these people) why do we need God if mathematics and physics explain all world processes?

Sometimes different reformers of a social structure, acting in the mode of passion became confused in their speculations and merged a true well-being with one which was not a well-being. For example, a natural division of society according to individual qualities filtered through the prism of passion and ignorance led to the system of castes in the Eastern world and the system of classes in the Western world. And thus, it perverted the entire educational system, limiting educational opportunities for different people even if they possessed a suitable nature, and, on the contrary, forcefully educating those who did not possess this quality of nature. The same original idea could sometimes manifest itself in quite bizarre forms. For example, the same concept of individual propensity, which is fundamental in the varnashrama system, became the base of eugenics in the modern world derived from Darwin's theory. According to it, everyone has a certain genetic propensity, and therefore it is important to create the right pairs of men and women to produce favourable offspring. There is nothing extraordinary about the concept itself. It was also in the Vedic varnashrama system, when the seniors used to select spouses for their children according to certain rules to produce favourable offspring. But under the influence of the lower modes of nature in the modern world, at a certain moment the eugenics followers came to an opinion that for the welfare of the coming generations it is necessary to clean the Earth from the carriers of "inferior" genes; to uproot everyone who "spoil" the life of a society by their mere existence; and to breed an "ideal" human. Since if there are no people with "bad" genes, everyone on Earth will live better during many centuries in the future. This simplified philosophy followed, for example, by Nazi Germany, which justified extermination of the entire populations for the sake of the idea of a "brighter future." And of course, to teach it was also considered beneficial to the society and to individuals.

If to look at the history of Western civilization from a bird's eye view, we can see that different variations of worldviews regularly emerged, defining the notion of humans' wellbeing in their own way. And because of the differences in worldviews the methodology of comprehending the world also changed. This trivial and practically self-evident truth would not have deserved a thorough examination, had it not been for one important point: the analysis of the instruments and structure of the educational process that we use. Through this the analysis we will be able to find deviations in our understanding of what we should consider the highest wellbeing, and vice versa; as well as how our unconscious attitudes and values related to our conditioning influence the way we organize our educational process. Thus, someone, who has not completely established themselves yet in the

complex picture of the values of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and experienced them in their own life, will undoubtedly distort the process of education. And even if we are not yet able to see particular examples of it, we should at least understand that we ourselves may be participants of such an action.

Without going into the subtleties and details of the various philosophies and not to turn this work into an encyclopedia of educational history, we will present a few simplified examples to demonstrate the principle described above. It will also allow us to take a broader view on education because we will see its various forms. Such an excursion will prepare us to perform the task we will face later in our study: not to see an educational process as we usually perceive it, but in different forms that are sometimes completely unfamiliar to us.

Socrates prioritized self-knowledge, in which education led to intellectual and moral development, and therefore chose a question-and-answer method as his main means of education to awaken awareness and intelligence. "Socratic dialogue" was a striking demonstration of his approach to education. It was basically a discussion that first showed a person their incomplete knowledge of the subject and then allowed them to see the unknown aspects of the topic through various prompting questions and eventually bringing them to a more comprehensive knowledge of the subject.

Plato divided people into classes, very much along the lines of the concept of the four varnas. He believed that while the aim of education was to attain goodness, each class should have its own goodness: wisdom for intellectuals, courage for warriors, and so on. In addition, he gave a special place to comprehension of the domain of "ideas", and thus emphasized "subtle" sciences, such as mathematics.

Aristotle devoted more time to practical scientific disciplines because he proposed to begin from observation of the world and to draw conclusions from observed phenomena. And, if to set aside all the complexities of his reflections in regards of the well-being, he saw perception of the phenomenal world and its structure either as a well-being as such or as an instrument for living comfortably in the material world. In fact, it was he who pioneered the so-called "scientific" approach, which was later opposed to the "religious" approach and changed the world accordingly.

In ancient Rome statehood and practical life were considered a well-being for society, while moral, ethical, or aesthetic education was not as valued as in ancient Greece. And so, education took place in different ways depending on specific time. First in family they taught appropriate craft and military arts, since any parent was proficient at them; and a few centuries later education was carried out by slaves, who could teach practical science, such as arithmetic or grammar. Fine arts, such as music or singing, were not included in that educational system because they were considered "daydreaming" as many Romans believed. These subjects were included a few centuries later, when aesthetics was considered important and essential for the development of the state system.

Then, with the increasing spread of Christianity for many centuries to come the acceptance of the teachings of Jesus Christ became the educational concept of well-being, and its understanding

used to change over the centuries. At the same time, the sciences were downgraded or even categorically rejected because they contradicted the interpretation of the Christian dogmas of that time, for example, geocentricity.

At the same time on the territory of Slavic nations the culture of education of the first millennium manifested through stories with moral and ethical lessons. Then in Russia schools began to spread since 988, the first year of its Christianisation. It related to the purpose of teaching a new religion, which was set by the state before the system of education. It would have been easier to reach the goal if at least higher classes were literate. At that time schools were not only educational institutions but also centres of culture, as it was the place where the manuscripts were copied and translated from other languages. Since then and for the next four hundred years or more, education took place mainly in churches. Schools were established mainly in monasteries, run by monks, who taught primarily a religious worldview suited to that time. It was not until the 1700s when private schools began to proliferate, although up to the 1700s they were still connected to the church. Teaching was done predominantly by clergymen; they focused on writing and grammar based on religious texts, church singing, dialectic, rhetoric, surveying, geography, and astrology.

In the West by the 16th century Christian Catholic culture and the education it promoted were separated from the scholastic world and sometimes opposed to it because they were seen as a distraction from the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. However, it created more and more resentment among people. They wanted to see not just dogmatic doctrine but, doctrine connected with the observed reality of the natural science. The rise of such moods was closely related to the intense development of art, literature, and scientific knowledge, intensified after the invention of printing. Ideologists of that era began to promote harmonious and comprehensive development of an individual. But without a proficient synthesis of spiritual science and material science the Renaissance over time became a launching pad for the increased rejection of religious teachings and the triumph of science in people's minds. And under Peter the Great all those trends reached Russia. There was a serious transformation of the educational system, schools began to include exact sciences with an emphasis on mathematical knowledge; a gradual but not abrupt transition from religious education to secular began.

Education, however, was still associated with religion until the Bolsheviks came to power but to a much lesser extent than before. Schools taught the Law of God, church singing, and there were church-parish schools. At the time of the formation of the USSR there was another major change in the educational system. First, church education was completely removed, or rather replaced by the propaganda of a new ideology of that time with socialism as the highest well-being. Second, skilled workers were badly needed at the time of the new ideology, the state system, and the development of industrialization. They were regarded as an "instrumental" well-being, which made it possible to achieve the ultimate, ideological well-being. Therefore, in the country to train people to perform the necessary conveyorized labour became the primarily purpose of schools. Of course, it changed in the later years of the Soviet Union, more academic sciences and approaches to education were added, but an assembly-line style itself remained in the form of unified curricula, streaming forms of

educational process etc. They are now so much a part of the culture of education that we can hardly imagine it any other way.

Thus, from the above examples we can see a rather large spectrum of educational forms that emerged from a certain perception of the goals a process should lead to. We can see for ourselves what education has become nowadays depending on the place we live in and the time we read this book. Again, by looking closely at what and how schools and universities teach, we can see what modern society considers “well-being”. We will talk more about different substitutions in the minds of devotees at various points of this book, but to ensure that education in our society is properly structured the first question to answer is: What do we consider well-being, or at least what should we consider well-being, even if our conditioned nature and externally imposed materialistic concepts sometimes interfere with our understanding? The point is that sometimes we may not be aware of the existence of concepts that were planted in our minds before Krishna consciousness, and which still affect us, if not in tune with Krishna consciousness. Conditioned by a particular form of education and attitudes that we have encountered in family, school, university and elsewhere, we will tend to copy them into the sphere of our educational activities in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Spirituality as the Essence of Education



lila, 8.245).

If we look at the classification of knowledge given in the Sacred Scriptures, we will see four types of knowledge and education:

«Material education aims at increasing the activities of material sense gratification. Beyond material sense gratification is another negative form of knowledge called brahma-vidyā, or impersonal transcendental knowledge. But beyond that brahma-vidyā, or knowledge of the impersonal Brahmana, is knowledge of devotional service to the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu. This knowledge is higher. And higher still is devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, which is the topmost form of education.» (Madhya-

In the contemporary world, the first type of knowledge is overwhelmingly emphasized; and very rarely do we see those who advocate the second type. The third type of knowledge is extremely rare, while the fourth one is out of the question.

There are different departments of knowledge in different universities and many technological institutions to study and understand the subtle laws of material nature—medical research laboratories to study the physiological condition of the material body—but there is no institution to study the constitutional position of the soul. This is the greatest drawback of material civilization, which is external manifestation of the soul. They are enamored by the

glimmering manifestation of the cosmic body or the individual body, but they do not try to understand the basic principles of this glimmering situation. (Press-release, 22 december 1968)

«Generally, people are not educated in this confidential knowledge; they are educated in external knowledge. As far as ordinary education is concerned, people are involved with so many departments: politics, sociology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, engineering, etc. There are so many departments of knowledge all over the world and many huge universities, but there is, unfortunately, no university or educational institution where the science of the spirit soul is instructed. Yet the soul is the most important part of the body; without the presence of the soul, the body has no value. Still people are placing great stress on the bodily necessities of life, not caring for the vital soul» (Bhagavad Gita, 9.2).

Thus, the image of a contemporary educated person with good erudition in various aspects of life and a good command of various intellectual skills aimed at the goals of modern society is prevalent in society. However, this image represents the lowest form of education, and Śrīla Prabhupāda, putting it mildly, did not think very high of it:

Because there is no cultural education in this age of Kali, everyone is spiritually untrained, and everyone is therefore to be considered sudra. (Srimad Bhagavatam 7.15.70)

Educational institutions should not aim to teach technology, for a technologist cannot properly be called educated. A technologist is a sudra; only one who studies the Vedas may properly be called a learned man (pandita). The duty of a brahmana is to become learned in the Vedic literature and teach the Vedic knowledge to other brahmanas. (Cc, Adi 17.253)

Prabhupada: [break] How to kill child. This is education. Huh? Educated girl means how to divorce husband, how to kill child. Is it not? Educated, modern educated girl means how to become unfaithful to the husband, how to divorce and how to kill child. (Morning walk, 26 november 1975)

Since a living being is naturally full of knowledge, be one an atheist, an agnostic, a believer, or a devotee, a person unconsciously and consciously would value happiness and knowledge in pursuit of them. But, lacking an understanding of the higher knowledge one will strive for available knowledge, as the higher knowledge is not available to them because of the contamination of consciousness, even if one hears about this knowledge. Thus, from the point of view of its limited perception a modern society naturally values a learned person because it is the top of knowledge. So why did Śrīla Prabhupāda have a low opinion of such people? The point is what to compare them to. If to compare their knowledge with total ignorance in the world of relativity, it is certainly better than ignorance. But if to compare it to the high spiritual truths, it loses all values, just as there is no value in the reflection of a precious object. A person educated as a physicist or biologist at Ivy League university would certainly be considered educated by the society. However, this knowledge is still a form of technical education, and it will not actually make a significant change in a person or a society:

«Educational institutions should not aim to teach technology, for a technologist cannot properly be called educated. A technologist is a śūdra; only one who studies the Vedas may properly be called a learned man (paṇḍita). The duty of a brāhmaṇa is to become learned in the Vedic literature and teach the Vedic knowledge to other brāhmaṇas. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we are simply teaching our students to become fit brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas. In our school at Dallas, the students are learning English and Sanskrit, and through these two languages they are studying all our books, such as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is and The Nectar of Devotion. It is a mistake to educate every student as a technologist. There must be a group of students who become brāhmaṇas. Without brāhmaṇas who study the Vedic literature, human society will be entirely chaotic.» (Adi-lila, 17.253).

Knowledge refers to understanding what is spirit and what is matter. Ordinary knowledge obtained by a university education pertains only to matter, and it is not accepted here as knowledge. Knowledge means knowing the distinction between spirit and matter. In modern education there is no knowledge about spirit; they are simply taking care of the material elements and bodily needs. Therefore academic knowledge is not complete. (Bg, 10.4-5)

Fundamentally different values are the root of Śrīla Prabhupāda's attitude. One day at the airport Śrīla Prabhupāda, observing passengers' check before boarding a plane, told a disciple that such an inspection is a good demonstration that modern education does not really work, because to check means that people are not trusted. And as everyone is inspected, not just uneducated people, means that even a college degree does not guarantee that a person will not commit a crime. And it means that education does not really mould worthy individuals whom society could trust. But this is only half of the problem. The main problem is that modern society believes that to possess more knowledge is a virtue because it develops memory and reasoning skills. With more information one can draw more accurate and long-term conclusions about the operations of the material world to discover and develop new directions that can make one's life in the material world easier. But, from the top of spiritual knowledge, it all has little value at best; rather it even harms true goals, because it is a distraction in its "external splendour":

The education that keeps the conditioned soul bound life after life is called materialistic education. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thakura has explained that materialistic education expands the influence of maya. Such an education induces the conditioned soul to be increasingly attracted to materialistic life and to stray further and further away from liberation from unwanted miseries. (Srimad Bhagatam, 7.5.32)

According to the Scriptures, there are five levels of knowledge: pratyaksha (knowledge gained through observation), paroksha (knowledge gained through hearing from an authoritative source), aparoksha (knowledge that leads to self-awareness), adhokshaja (knowledge of the Lord and His nature), and apracrita (understanding the Lord in His human form).

«So therefore even if you are brāhmaṇa status, you are not still aprākṛta. You are aparokṣa. Aparokṣa status, not even adhokṣaja. As I told you, there are different stages of knowledge, so

the brahma-jṣāna is aparokṣa-jṣāna. Pratyakṣa, parokṣa, aparokṣa. And the spiritual planets, Vaikuṅṭha knowledge, that is adhokṣaja. And the knowledge about Kṛṣṇa and His planet, Goloka Vṛndāvana, that is aprākṛta. So we have to transcend from this prākṛta status of life. It is very, very high grade status, aprākṛta, aprākṛta status» (Lecture, 13 December, 1974).

Indeed, a material education received from the "authorities" is one step higher than ignorance, but three steps lower than the one offered by the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition!

Moreover, such knowledge is already contaminated by the mode of ignorance, and therefore in reality it would never bring even material happiness, although externally it may appear that such perception of the world would lead to progress. But technical progress and happiness, even material happiness, are far from being synonyms.

«In the Padma Purāṇa, man's sinful activities have been analyzed and are shown to be the results of sin after sin. Those who are engaged in fruitive activities are entangled in different stages and forms of sinful reactions.» (Bhagavad Gita, 9.2).

«In the mode of ignorance, people are just like animals and cannot see things clearly. In the mode of ignorance, for example, they do not see that by killing one animal they are taking the chance of being killed by the same animal in the next life. Because people have no education in actual knowledge, they become irresponsible.» (Bhagavad-gita, 14.17).

Śrīla Prabhupāda regularly mentioned the hippies as a product of the educational system of that time. In what seemed to be the most "prosperous" country the education only made young people disillusioned in life. Now the hippie movement is gone, but it has been replaced by people's massive addiction to antidepressants, and their sales are only increasing every year. Thus, the whole purpose of modern education is to multiply attitudes in people's minds on the pretence of progress, which ultimately bring only misery even from the point of view of material life. That is why Śrīla Prabhupāda was very harsh and negative about a modern educational system:

The whole system of education is geared to sense gratification, and if a learned man thinks it over, he sees that the children of this age are being intentionally sent to the slaughterhouses of so-called education. (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.1.22)

Later, we will go back to a more detailed discussion of the feasibility of devotees' education in various school subjects such as mathematics or geography, but for now it is important to emphasize one key point: the real education is a spiritual education. In Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.29.50, Śrīla Prabhupāda states it as follows:

Everyone has dormant love for Kṛṣṇa, and by culture and education that has to be awakened. That is the purpose of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Once Lord Caitanya asked Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya what the best part of education was, and Rāmānanda Rāya replied that the

best part of education is advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. » (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.29.50).

In the same commentary he supports his statement with quotes from other verses:

«One who has fixed his mind on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa is to be understood as having the best education and as having studied all the Vedas.» There are also other appropriate quotes in Caitanya-bhāgavata: “The perfect result of an education is the fixing of one’s mind on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. » (Ādi 13.178).

«Conquering the world by means of material education is not desirable. If one engages himself in devotional service, his education is perfected. » (Ādi 13.173)

«The purpose of education is to understand Kṛṣṇa and His devotional service. If one does not do so, then education is false. » (Ādi 12.49).

«Being cultured, educated, very active and religious means developing natural love for Kṛṣṇa. » (Antya 3.44)

As mentioned above, all living beings in this world aspire to knowledge and happiness, but they just do not understand how to achieve it, although spirituality is the only way. If to look at the very essence of the material world, it presents an opportunity for a soul’s transformation to return to its original Krishna consciousness:

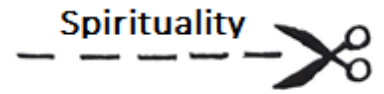
«Atheistic rascals think that there is no God and that the creation has taken place by chance, just as a man and woman meet by chance and the woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a child. Actually, however, this is not the fact. The fact is that there is a purpose for this creation: to give the conditioned soul a chance to return to his original consciousness, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and then return home, back to Godhead, and be completely happy in the spiritual world. In the material world the conditioned soul is given a chance to satisfy his senses, but at the same time he is informed by Vedic knowledge that this material world is not his actual place for happiness» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 9.24.58).

Therefore, undoubtedly spirituality is the essence of the educational process. And it works only to the extent of the spirituality manifested in it. Even material knowledge works to the extent it conveys a reflection of the true knowledge of the Scriptures:

«The Sanskrit verbal root of veda can be interpreted variously, but the purport is finally one. Veda means knowledge. Any knowledge you accept is veda, for the teachings of the Vedas are the original knowledge.» (“Sri Isopanishad”, introduction).

Spiritual Watershed

An obvious question that arises is: Where is the boundary between spiritual and materialistic education? We shall speak of secular education, which is involved in the process of devotional service, when we speak of other principles. For now, we need to understand the minimal boundary of spiritual knowledge, which is spiritual itself but not made so by using it in devotional service. Is the concept of devotional service alone spiritual? Or, on the other hand, is knowledge of the gunas of the material world spiritual?



The key to understand this question can be found in the charter of The League of Devotees, which, like ISKCON, had a list of goals, and the first one states the follows:

«To propagate spiritual knowledge systematically for checking the imbalance of life, to the whole race of India and the world over, with a view to educate the people in general in the techniques of spiritual life as the basis for balanced psychic and biological developments of the human race and thereby achieve real unity and peace of the contending elements of the present world».

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote the same statement in his personal diary while formulating the purposes of ISKCON:

To educate the greater human society in the techniques of spiritual life as the basis for a balanced psychic and biological development, and thereby achieve for the first time in human society a real peace and unity among the contending forces in the world today.

What did Śrīla Prabhupāda mean by "the techniques of spiritual life"? The answer is also in the charter of The League of Devotees:

«The League of Devotees' invites every individual member of the human society to become a constituent member of the Society and learn there of the Spiritual techniques in perfect order. The 'Bhagwat Geeta' is recognised all over the world. This great book of knowledge is the basis of Spiritual techniques».

Therefore, we can see that Śrīla Prabhupāda considered Bhagavad-gītā to be the basis of spiritual techniques. What is the foundation of Bhagavad-gītā? Here is how Śrīla Prabhupāda explains it in Srimad Bhagavatam, 6.15.3:

«The misunderstanding of the conditioned soul is the bodily conception of life. The body is material, but within the body is the soul. This is spiritual understanding. Unfortunately, one who is in ignorance, under the spell of material illusion, accepts the body to be the self. He cannot understand that the body is matter. Like small particles of sand, bodies come together and are separated by the force of time, and people falsely lament for unification and separation.

Unless one knows this, there is no question of happiness. Therefore in Bhagavad-gītā (2.13) this is the first instruction given by the Lord: "... As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change." We are not the body; we are spiritual beings trapped in the body. Our real interest lies in understanding this simple fact. Then we can make further spiritual progress. Otherwise, if we remain in the bodily conception of life, our miserable material existence will continue forever. Political adjustments, social welfare work, medical assistance and the other programs we have manufactured for peace and happiness will never endure. We shall have to undergo the sufferings of material life one after another. Therefore material life is said to be duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam; it is a reservoir of miserable conditions».

Thus, the foundation of spiritual knowledge is to understand the difference between the self from the gross and subtle bodies. Knowledge that does not involve such a division and is based on the understanding of the human being as a set of body cells is not spiritual. Therefore, knowledge from the guna of goodness, for example related to one's lifestyle, does not make sense itself, but only when it results from the understanding of the true spiritual nature of a living being following by the principles of behaviour and attitude toward the world and other living beings. On the other hand, it is spiritual knowledge to understand the difference between a living being and material shells surrounding, even if it is not yet directly related to the next step, devotional service to the Lord.

Devotional Service as an Educational Process



However, the understanding of the difference between a living being and a body is only a basic understanding of the nature of a living being. It's been noted earlier that the goal of the process of education is to realize Krishna and to come to Krishna consciousness. What is the process that leads to this result? The answer is obvious, because Śrīla Prabhupada tells us constantly in his books:

«No one can understand Kṛṣṇa as He is by the blunt material senses. But He reveals Himself to the devotees, being pleased with them for their transcendental loving service unto Him» (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.234, quoted in Bhagavad-gita 7.3).

The Supreme Lord is achieved by devotion (bhaktyā mām abhijānāti [Bg. 18.55]). One's devotion and sincere desire to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead are the only qualifications. (SB 5.19.7)

So, if the essence of education is to understand Krishna, and devotional service is the only process to understand Krishna, then the conclusion is obvious: education is devotional service, as well as the activity that eventually leads to devotional service or assists in its fulfillment. Everything else is not education, but an external similarity of it. On the contrary, every activity in devotional

service is educational. It is not only about the study of the Scriptures to learn more about the world and devotional service but all kinds of devotional service itself, because it is also a process of transformation of one's consciousness that leads one to understanding the Lord.

We began this section with the description of different people's definition of the concept of well-being in various ways. Indeed, in the material world well-being is a relative concept. But there is also an absolute, supreme well-being. The very first question presented in the Srimad Bhagavatam asks what it is:

«Please, therefore, being blessed with many years, explain to us, in an easily understandable way, what you have ascertained to be the absolute and ultimate good for the people in general».
(Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.1.9)

And the whole Srimad Bhagavatam is the answer to this question, but it is summarized in verse 1.2.6:

The supreme occupation [dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self.

There are only two ways, the process of liberation from the matter and the process of immersion into it. The first can be called education, and the second loss of self. Thus, secular education does not exist, it is only a form of oblivion of the spiritual nature.

The boundary that distinguishes oblivion from education lies in whether the process gives us an ability to distinguish between the matter and the spirit (see the previous subsection). Thus, there are many forms of educational processes: karma yoga, jnana yoga, ashtanga yoga, and others. But they all work only on condition of the presence of bhakti:

Impersonalists do not take to devotional service, but take to other practices, such as the analytical study of the material elements, the discrimination between matter and spirit, and the mystic yoga system. These are beneficial only insofar as they are complementary to devotional service. Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore told Sanātana Gosvāmī that without a touch of devotional service jñāna, yoga and Sāṅkhya philosophy cannot give one the desired results. The impersonalists wish to merge into the Supreme Brahmana; however, merging into the Supreme Brahmana also requires a touch of devotional service.. <...> In all processes — karma, jñāna or yoga — bhakti is required. (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.31.12)

Therefore, bhakti is the essence which transforms all other processes into educational ones by its presence or its shadow.

All the other principles of education to be discussed later in this book are attempts to understand what inherent qualities bhakti is associated with in our case and how to manifest bhakti in our lives.

There are several important practical implications to follow. First, The Nectar of Devotion (Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu) is the main textbook that describes the process of proper education. As we recall from Śrīla Prabhupāda's words, Śrīla Rupa Gosvami articulated the key principles of devotional service without going into too much detail. Thus, The Nectar of Devotion is a systematic textbook on pedagogy and andragogy. Addressing the subject of education, it is worthwhile first to study this book as a primary source of Vaishnava didactics. Shuddha-bhakti chintamani compiled by H.S. Shivarama Swami is another book that systematically describes the science of devotional service, and it is based on the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and previous Acharyas; and it is also worth reading since it describes in detail the difference between pure bhakti and various forms of devotion with impurities.

Secondly, because of our conditionality the mindset to think of education as something that does not constitute education is deep enough in our subconscious mind:

One may be a very learned scholar and execute his prescribed duty very nicely, but if he does not ultimately become inquisitive about the Supreme Personality of Godhead and is indifferent to śravaṇam kīrtanam (hearing and chanting) [SB 7.5.23], all that he has done is but a waste of time. (Cc, Adi 7.146)

Even when we study the Scriptures, we sometimes substitute the purpose of the study with something different than the process of devotional service. For example, when knowledge as such is not important to us but rather a collection of information to satisfy our ego and mind. In addition, we may tend to study disciplines that are not education on their own. We will talk more about the possibility of studying such subjects later.

And thirdly, our conditioning from previous experiences causes us to consider education only as classroom studies, that is, education in our mind is attached to a very specific form that comes from our life before we begin devotional service. Even nama-hattas and Sunday programs often are not considered as educational activities, and we do not take into account the rest of the life of devotees. Therefore, we usually consider only the study of the Scriptures and the lectures of senior Vaishnavas as education. We unconsciously want it to take place in the form we have been accustomed to since Soviet and post-Soviet school days, although education is much broader than that; it can and should be our whole life:

«Kṛṣṇa is the origin of Lord Viṣṇu. He should always be remembered and never forgotten at any time. All the rules and prohibitions mentioned in the śāstras should be the servants of these two principles.» ("Chaitanya-charitamrita", Madhya-lila, 22.113).

We will talk about it in our discussion of the principle of continuity in education. However, this attitude toward education usually reverts us to our previous error - the study of the Scriptures becomes an academic process rather than a spiritual one.

Final Outcome of Education



Let us explore the final outcome of education from the perspective of the vision of the world, our practices, and the ultimate goal in our society. That is, what education should ultimately lead to in terms of our worldview, activities, and inner perceptions of the world.

Sambandha

A well-known Bhagavad-gita verse about accepting a spiritual master (4.34) is followed by a verse that speaks of the knowledge that a disciple eventually receives:

«Translation: Having obtained real knowledge from a self-realized soul, you will never fall again into such illusion, for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words, that they are Mine.

Purport: The result of receiving knowledge from a self-realized soul, or one who knows things as they are, is learning that all living beings are parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The sense of an existence separate from Kṛṣṇa is called māyā (mā – not, yā – this).» (Bhagavad-gita, 4.35).

Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed a similar thought in the ISKCON mission statement in his diary, explaining the purpose or the result of devotional spiritual practices:

To attempt to save men individually from the chain of victimization the ongoing trend in modern civilization operates by, in the name of ideologies of false sentiment, so that Man may again be a free soul, to act and live freely with spiritual vision. This is possible by individual spiritual initiation, Diksha, when a man can see everything in Godhead and Godhead in everything.

Please note that all following mission statements quoted below speak of a deepening of "this truth," which was identified in the previous paragraph: "the ability to see everything in God and God in everything."

(H) To further toward realization this highest truth as revealed by Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the six Goswamins headed by Śrīla Rupa and Sanatana Goswamins.

(I) To have for its objectives amongst the others four principles which the Goswamins had in view. They are the following:

1. To erect a holy place of transcendental pastimes as well as a place where members of the Lord Sri Krishna can flourish.

2. To propagate all over the world in the form of missionaries the process of devotion, the transcendental service to the Godhead, and to make known that this devotional service is the main function of the human being.

3. In order to accomplish this, to adopt proselytizing methods of peaceful means and to establish a broader society of association for all members, including scholars and admirers, to engage in this service as put forth in the Śrīmad Bhagwatam.

4. To install, wherever it is possible, the worship and temple of Radhakrishna and that of Sri Chaitanya, and to give facility to everyone to become trained in the modes of Archan or preparatory principles of devotional service.

It is worth noting that such a vision is only possible with a complete conception that includes not only Krishna Himself but also His energies. That is why the Scriptures explain the structure of our world as well, even though at first glance it may seem (only seem) unrelated to devotional service to Him and realization of Him in a personal aspect.

«As stated in Bhagavad-gītā, one can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth, only through devotional service (bhaktyā mām abhijānāti). As stated in the Bhāgavatam, the object of devotional service is mām, Kṛṣṇa. And, as explained in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, to understand Kṛṣṇa means to understand Kṛṣṇa in His personal form with His internal energy, His external energy, His expansions and His incarnations. There are many diverse departments of knowledge in understanding Kṛṣṇa. Sāṅkhya philosophy is especially meant for persons who are conditioned by this material world. It is generally understood by the paramparā system, or by disciplic succession, to be the science of devotional service» (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.26.1).

Samagram means "complete." To understand Kṛṣṇa means to understand the whole cosmic manifestation, God, the material nature, the time factor, the living entities, their respective relationship, everything.» (Lecture, 14 December 1972).

«To understand Kṛṣṇa means to understand everything = how it is generated, how it is maintained and how it is annihilated. That is full Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» (Lecture, 16 May, 1973).

Such understanding of the Lord is a complete and meaningful sambandha.

Abhidheya

As a result of this vision, a devotee becomes involved in pure devotional service, which Śrīla Rupa Gosvami defines in Bhakti rasamrita-sindhu (1.1.11), and Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the introduction to The Nectar of Devotion:

«The definition of a pure devotee, as given by Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, can be summarized thus: his service is favorable and is always in relation to Kṛṣṇa. In order to keep the purity of such Kṛṣṇa conscious activities, one must be freed from all material desires and philosophical speculation. Any desire except for the service of the Lord is called material desire. And “philosophical speculation” refers to the sort of speculation that ultimately arrives at a conclusion of voidism or impersonalism. This conclusion is useless for a Kṛṣṇa conscious person. Only rarely by philosophical speculation can one reach the conclusion of worshiping Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa. This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* itself».

«The ultimate end of philosophical speculation, then, must be Kṛṣṇa, with the understanding that Kṛṣṇa is everything, the cause of all causes, and that one should therefore surrender unto Him. If this ultimate goal is reached, then philosophical advancement is favorable, but if the conclusion of philosophical speculation is voidism or impersonalism, that is not bhakti.

Karma, or fruitive activities, are sometimes understood to be ritualistic activities. There are many persons who are very much attracted by the ritualistic activities described in the Vedas. But if one becomes attracted simply to ritualistic activities without understanding Kṛṣṇa, his activities are unfavorable to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Actually, Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be based simply on hearing, chanting, remembering, etc. Described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are nine different processes, besides which everything done is unfavorable to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus, one should always be guarding against falldowns.».

«Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has also mentioned in this definition of bhakti the word *jṣāna-karmādi*. This *karmādi* (fruitive work) consists of activities that are unable to help one attain to pure devotional service. Many forms of so-called renunciation are also not favorable to Kṛṣṇa conscious devotional service».

«Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has also quoted a definition from the *Nārada Paścaraṅtra*, as follows: “One should be free from all material designations and, by Kṛṣṇa consciousness, must be cleansed of all material contamination. He should be restored to his pure identity, in which he engages his senses in the service of the proprietor of the senses.” So when our senses are engaged for the actual proprietor of the senses, that is called devotional service. In our conditional state, our senses are engaged in serving these bodily demands. When the same senses are engaged in executing the order of Kṛṣṇa, our activities are called bhakti».

«As long as one identifies himself as belonging to a certain family, a certain society or a certain person, he is said to be covered with designations. When one is fully aware that he does not belong to any family, society or country, but is eternally related to Kṛṣṇa, he then realizes that his energy should be employed not in the interests of so-called family, society or country, but in the interests of Kṛṣṇa. This is purity of purpose and the platform of pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness».

Prayojana

A person develops pure love for God, prema, as a result of the practice of pure devotional service (Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya-lila, 19.177-178). Although bhava, that precedes prema, does not belong to sadhya-bhakti (to which only prema belongs), we will not attempt to explore such intimate topics by describing prema. But since prema usually manifests from bhava, we will cite here Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's characteristics of a devotee at the level of bhava ("The Nectar of Devotion," chapter 18):

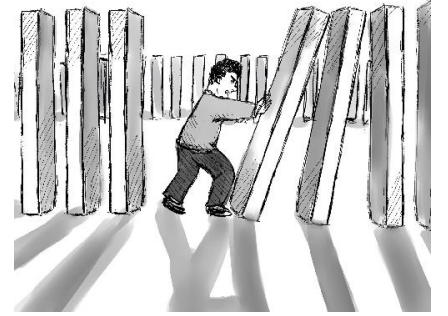
- «1. He is always anxious to utilize his time in the devotional service of the Lord. He does not like to be idle. He wants service always, twenty-four hours a day, without deviation.
2. He is always reserved and perseverant.
3. He is always detached from all material attraction.
4. He does not long for any material respect in return for his activities.
5. He is always certain that Kṛṣṇa will bestow His mercy upon him.
6. He is always very eager to serve the Lord faithfully.
7. He is very much attached to the chanting of the holy names of the Lord.
8. He is always eager to describe the transcendental qualities of the Lord.
9. He is very pleased to live in a place where the Lord's pastimes are performed, e.g., Mathurā, Vṛndāvana or Dvārakā.».

A detailed description of these characteristics, as well as a more detailed explanation of what follows bhava may be found in The Nectar of Devotion beginning from chapter 18.

All these together (the process of attaining sambandha, abhidheya and prayojana) may be considered a goal of education in our society, and the whole methodology of spiritual education should be built in accordance with it. Anything that helps to achieve this goal is favourable and accepted; if it does not help, it is rejected. Overall, as it has been mentioned above, a more detailed understanding of education is given in The Nectar of Devotion, which we strongly recommend to study carefully because the education in ISKCON is simply impossible without the knowledge set forth in this book.

Quasi-spiritual Education

There are laws in the world; the world was already created in a certain way, and we may wish it were different because of our conditioning but it is as God intended it to be. And it has its own laws, such as the law of karma. If we try to disrespect it in our actions, it always leads to undesirable results like any other law of existence. It is not a matter of chance. An attempt to deviate from the laws of God leads to a negative outcome always and without exception; and one must fully understand it. A person usually does it with an expectation of an easy life and a quick benefit, sincerely seeing nothing wrong in such a violation because they are blindfolded by material desires and ignorance, and they do not understand their long-term consequences. Even if you tell a person about them, they will usually ignore these words because the fire of personal desires blazes inside.



Education also has its own laws or principles, which must be followed if we aim to achieve a desired outcome despite of our desire to disregard them. These are the principles we will talk about in this study.

And if to speak of the very essence of education, spirituality, discussed in this section, there is a danger not only to neglect it, as materialists do, but also to imitate it.

In the material world everything has an inner self and an external form. Whereas in the spiritual world these two qualities are inseparably united; in material reality a self and form are separable, so, it is so easy to adopt an external form of something and lose the essence in the process. For example, thanks to plastic and various chemical compounds it is possible to imitate the look and smell of an orange, but it is no longer an orange in its key characteristics. A similar process is possible in education. Often the process can externally resemble education. But if we look at the outcomes, we see that real education did not occur at that moment, although externally an activity is very similar to education. That is, the goals to which education should lead were not achieved. In the realm of spirituality, the essence lies in the motive of activity, and if we disregard the motive, the external form may remain the same, but the activity will change and therefore will not lead to desired outcomes.

Also, there are so-called disciples who become submissive to a spiritual master most artificially, with an ulterior motive. They also cannot understand what Kṛṣṇa consciousness or devotional service is. (SB 3.32.40)

The heart must be cleansed without ulterior motive. As Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says, anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.11]. In other words, there should not be any external motive. One should not attempt material upliftment, understanding the Supreme by speculative knowledge, fruitive activity, severe austerity and penance, and so on. All these activities are against the natural growth of spontaneous love of Godhead. As soon

as these are present within the heart, the heart should be understood to be unclean and therefore unfit to serve as Kṛṣṇa's sitting place. We cannot perceive the Lord's presence in our hearts unless our hearts are cleansed. (Cc, Madhya 12.135)

Therefore, any activity that loses its connection with Krishna ceases to be devotional service, and thus it is completely or almost completely devoid of its transformative properties.

For example, we may often substitute spirituality for goodness, purity, asceticism, simplicity, etc. They have no special value as such but become meaningful only in connection with devotional service. Let us take as an example a wrong approach to education. Why is it necessary to do certain things, such as to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning? Not because it pleases Krishna and therefore it is a service to Him, even though we act out of obligation rather than out of inner desire. And not because it is the Lord's daily routine (in fact, it is an extremely intimate moment of His pastimes that we may witness during Mangala-arati). And not even because our day will be more productive, and we will be able to do more service. And ultimately, not because goodness is a springboard for spiritual practice, meaning that to get up early at the time of goodness means to gain better conditions for our spiritual practice. Simply to get up at such time is beneficial as such because it is the most auspicious time of the day, and auspiciousness brings happiness. Some may not even see the contradiction in the last two sentences, but the point is that sometimes we mistakenly think that goodness separated from devotional service has some value as such, but when in fact it does not. Usually devotees do not admit (especially to themselves) that they sometimes make such a substitution in their mind, but if one looks carefully at their inner motives, one may sometimes see such a substitution of purpose in explanations of certain aspects of a Vaishnava's life. Other devotees do not wish to sacrifice their conditionality in the lower gunas for the sake of the Lord, and on the contrary, reject the importance of goodness generally opposing it to devotional service. But in both, the external pathos is not behind the desire of devotional service, but behind the eternal struggle with the gunas of material nature.

However, it should be noted that goodness creates an environment conducive to the acceptance and cultivation of bhakti. And therefore, if the one who teaches the guna of goodness bears in mind a connection with devotional service and a plan for its implementation, such activity still belongs to the educational process, even if they are not yet in the minds of the students. But as soon as such a connection is lost or diluted, the process loses a part or the whole of its educational power. The topic of study is not the point but the connection with Krishna consciousness. For example, Jayananda Prabhu taught a devotee who later became Jayapataka Swami how to hammer nails and tighten bolts. Was it spiritual education? Although the topic of instruction was not directly related to spirituality, the process of soul transformation worked through two factors. At that point there was communication with a devotee who possessed the necessary state of consciousness, and the fruit of the instruction ultimately became related to devotional service, as the nails were driven into the Deities' chariot for the coming Ratha yatra.

The same with all other activities. It applies even to the study of Scriptures. There are many worldly scholars who study the works of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and other acharyas, but they do not

become devotees. A similar substitution may occur to devotees when learned knowledge, but then bhakti, becomes a goal as such.

The word na, used repeatedly in the previous verse, indicates that one should not be very much proud of such credentials as an academic education in Vedic literature. (Bg 11.54)

(4) One should not try to read too many books, nor should one develop the idea of earning his livelihood by lecturing on or professionally reciting Srimad-Bhagavatam or Bhagavad-gita. (Nectar of Devotion 6)

Non-devotees, be the followers of the paths of karma or jnana, treat devotional service as a means to achieve an aside outcome:

The impersonalists are full of duplicity. Sometimes they pretend to execute devotional service, but their ultimate idea is to become one with the Supreme. This is duplicity, kapāṭa. (SB 3.27.6)

But devotees practice bhakti for the sake of bhakti and only bhakti. So, for example, devotees study the Scriptures not because they want to understand Krishna at the end, and this very attempt to do so positions us above Him, but because the very process of studying the Scriptures as devotional service is a process that brings happiness:

«It is not possible to comprehend the greatness of Kṛṣṇa and His opulences. The senses of the individual soul are limited and do not permit him to understand the totality of Kṛṣṇa's affairs. Still the devotees try to understand Kṛṣṇa, but not on the principle that they will be able to understand Kṛṣṇa fully at any specific time or in any state of life. Rather, the very topics of Kṛṣṇa are so relishable that they appear to the devotees as nectar. Thus the devotees enjoy them. In discussing Kṛṣṇa's opulences and His diverse energies, the pure devotees take transcendental pleasure. Therefore they want to hear and discuss them». (Bhagavad-gita, 10.19).

If happiness does not come, it is quite possible that we suppressed the study of the Scriptures as a process of bhakti yoga and degraded it to the level of academic education.

By the way, generally we can judge whether the process of education takes place or not by the manifestation of the characteristics of pure devotional service. If at least they are partially present, the process is working and everyone feels it; if not, something is wrong with the technology.

- (1) Pure devotional service brings immediate relief from all kinds of material distress.*
 - (2) Pure devotional service is the beginning of all auspiciousness.*
 - (3) Pure devotional service automatically puts one in transcendental pleasure.*
 - (4) Pure devotional service is rarely achieved.*
 - (5) Those in pure devotional service deride even the conception of liberation.*
 - (6) Pure devotional service is the only means to attract Kṛṣṇa.*
- (Nectar of Devotion, 1)*

For example, everyone may have experienced a feeling of hovering above the ground with happiness after association with devotees (however, such happiness is not always of a spiritual nature), or, on the contrary, a feeling of boredom studying a textbook of spiritual topics and presence of thoughts of material pleasures as a consequence. It is certainly not the only and sometimes not entirely accurate symptom due to various substitutions. Nevertheless, it can often be used to judge the effectiveness of an educational process.

To read more about these six symptoms and to be inspired by the remarkable results of the real educational process, please turn to the first chapter of The Nectar of Devotion.

Common Mistakes in the Principle of Spiritual Education



1. An effort to engage a devotee in conscious devotional service without changing their worldview. Of course, non-devotees could be engaged in unconscious devotional service and receive *agyata-bhakti-sukriti* which will take them to the path of bhakti. But it is important for a person who is ready to take the path of devotion to acquire a spiritual worldview that will become a foundation of all their activities but not a set of rules and actions, because without spiritual knowledge all their activity will remain at the material level

«Sacrifices sometimes take different forms according to the particular faith of the performer. When one's faith reaches the stage of transcendental knowledge, the performer of sacrifices should be considered more advanced than those who simply sacrifice material possessions without such knowledge, for without attainment of knowledge, sacrifices remain on the material platform and bestow no spiritual benefit. Real knowledge culminates in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the highest stage of transcendental knowledge. Without the elevation of knowledge, sacrifices are simply material activities. When, however, they are elevated to the level of transcendental knowledge, all such activities enter onto the spiritual platform». (Bhagavad-gita, 4.33)

Thus, a person performs activities that are like devotional service in form with material motives for pleasure or liberation. According to such a person, one either treats one's relatives unfavourably (because it is necessary to break illusory relationships with them that distract us from devotional service) or favourably (because good relationships with relatives are beneficial to our life, that is, to our material existence). A person may not be guided by the understanding that they are parts and parcels of Krishna and are as dear to Him as all other living beings, who have forgotten their connection with Him and have been wandering in the shadows of the material world for a long time. And because of the fate that brought us together I have a great chance to bring them closer to Krishna in one way or another by my

own example of inner happiness and Vaishnavas' behaviour and by teaching them devotional service that they are ready to accept.

If one does not have the right seed of bhakti based on a correct understanding of the world and one's own position in it, one may for years engage in practices with the purpose of gaining some material benefit or ultimate liberation from material suffering, rather than devotional service as such (though at first it is performed out of a sense of duty rather than love). On the contrary, a person who has a seed of right faith will be naturally inclined to behave properly:

«A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, being naturally purified, has no need of developing any other purificatory process of thought or action. On account of his being highly elevated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness he has already acquired all the good qualities and is following the rules and regulations prescribed for the mystic yogic process. Such rules are automatically practiced by the devotees. A concrete example is the quality of nonviolence, which is considered a good qualification. A devotee is naturally nonviolent and therefore doesn't have to practice nonviolence separately. Some people seek purification by joining a vegetarian movement, but a devotee is automatically a vegetarian. He doesn't need to practice separately in this matter or to join any society for vegetarians.» (The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 14).

2. To see education purely as a process directly related to the study of the Scriptures, that is to see education only as a classroom process with a teacher communicating spiritual knowledge but not the rest is not education. But we must remember that education is much broader and must involve the whole life of a devotee. An inappropriate approach considerably retards the development of a devotee because it does not involve them in devotional service less frequently. It is one thing. The second thing is that it creates rejection in people who are less inclined to be educated in this form by their innate nature. We will discuss it in more detail in the principle of continuity of education.

3. Not to see the process of studying the Scriptures as a process of humble occupation of one's senses, mind, and intellect in hearing spiritual subjects for the mercy of Krishna (who can reveal knowledge to us only by His mercy, being satisfied that we are engaged in devotional service to Him) but as a process of academic dissection of the Scriptures.

«Therefore those who begin to question why they are suffering or where they came from and where they shall go after death are proper students for understanding Bhagavad-gītā. The sincere student should also have a firm respect for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ... Unless one reads the Bhagavad-gītā in a submissive spirit, it is very difficult to understand Bhagavad-gītā, because it is a great mystery. (Bhagavad-gita, Introduction)

It is a matter of a purely internal mood, wherein it is not the Scripture that reveals itself by its will as the result of my service to it, but it is me trying to comprehend the truths of the Scripture with my material mind.

It is important to note that a genuinely educated Vaishnava possesses an accurate knowledge of the Scriptures but not an approximate one. Only such knowledge can lead to pure practice, and it is to be discussed later. To reject the study of the Scriptures is no better than to study them academically. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to give this example that his books should be studied like books on jurisprudence.

«Just like in the law court. You are lawyer. You are arguing. When you quote from a judgement, previous judgement, it is accepted. Similarly, when you give authoritative statement support of your talking, then it is perfect. That is the way.» (Room Conversation, September 2, 1973)

Those who are familiar with the subject are aware that this field of knowledge is known for precise and careful wording and reference of the primary sources. A similar knowledge of the Scriptures on the surface resembles academic knowledge, but there is an important nuance in the mind of the one who possesses it. In that person's mind such knowledge has a live connection with one's life of devotional service, rather than being separate from it.

«For one who simply makes an academic study of the Bhagavad-gītā, the science of Kṛṣṇa remains a mystery. The Bhagavad-gītā is not a book that one can just purchase from the bookstore and understand by scholarship alone. Arjuna was not a great scholar, nor a Vedāntist, nor a philosopher, nor a brāhmaṇa, nor a renunciant; he was a family and military man. But still Kṛṣṇa selected him to be the recipient of the Bhagavad-gītā and the first authority in the disciplic succession. Why? "Because you are My devotee." That is the qualification to understand the Bhagavad-gītā as it is and Kṛṣṇa as He is – one must become Kṛṣṇa conscious.» (On the Way to Krishna, chapter 2).

4. To study topics that are not related to spiritual education in any way. We will only mention this error here since we can talk about it in more detail only after we analyse a few other principles.



Practicality of Education

Principle of Practicality

Action is another inherent quality of existence. A living being is always active by nature, but an activity can either enslave or liberate us.

«Every living entity under the spell of the material energy is held to be in an abnormal condition of madness. In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam it is said, “Generally, the conditioned soul is mad because he is always engaged in activities that are the causes of bondage and suffering». (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 2).

Impersonalists do not consider activity to be one of the principles of existence, and so they try to stop it. But since it contradicts the nature of a living being, they are forced to go back to action even after achieving impersonal liberation for some time:

Prabhupada: Therefore the Mayavadi philosophers, the impersonalists, because they are not willing to serve Krishna, they stop willing. They again fall down. Vivekananda comes and opens hospitals. Just like your Christian missionaries. Yes. This is there. Willing, you cannot stop. You have to will badly or goodly, or godly. So better try to will godly, then badly will automatically... This is our process. You don't stop willing. Yes, we will—or Krishna's service. (Dialogue about Sopengauer's philosophy)

On the contrary, devotees understand that realization of spiritual truths as such is not enough; it is necessary to act in connection with them. Therefore, education can only refer to the active nature, but it must be manifested in Krishna consciousness.

«This devotional service is a sort of cultivation. It is not simply inaction for people who like to be inactive or devote their time to silent meditation. There are many different methods for people who want this, but cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is different. The particular word used by

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in this connection is *anuśīlana*, or cultivation by following the predecessor teachers (*ācāryas*). As soon as we say “cultivation,” we must refer to activity. Without activity, consciousness alone cannot help us.» (The Nectar of Devotion, Introduction).

Role of Sravanam in Educational Process

As we have learned from the previous principle, a genuine form of education is non-different from devotional service, though education includes several categories. And therefore, it also consists of nine forms:



«*Translation*: On one occasion the Lord inquired, “Of all types of education, which is the most important?” Rāmānanda Rāya replied, “No education is important other than the transcendental devotional service of Kṛṣṇa.

Purport: ... According to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (4.29.49), *tat karma hari-toṣaṁ yat sā vidyā tan-matir yayā*: “Work meant for pleasing the Supreme Lord is the best, and education that enhances one’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the best.”

Also, according to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.5.23-24):

śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam

arcanaṁ vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam

iti puṁsārpitā viṣṇau bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā

kriyeta bhagavaty addhā tan manye ’dhītam uttamam. This is a statement given by Prahlāda Mahārāja in answer to a question raised by his father. Prahlāda Mahārāja said, “To hear or chant about Lord Viṣṇu, to remember Him, to serve His lotus feet, to worship Him, to offer prayers to Him, to become His servant and His friend, to sacrifice everything for His service — all these are varieties of devotional service. One who is engaged in such activities is understood to be educated to the topmost perfection». (Madhya-līla, 8.245).

In this case, sravanam from this list really plays a particular role, as if it were to stand out from it:

Concentration of the mind upon Krishna the Supreme is made possible by prescribed devotional service in nine different forms, of which śravaṇam is the first and most important. (Bg 7.1)

(1) Sravanam. Hearing of the holy name of the Lord (sravanam) is the beginning of devotional service. Although any one of the nine processes is sufficient, in chronological order the hearing of the holy name of the Lord is the beginning. Indeed, it is essential. ... Hearing from the text of Srimad-Bhagavatam is considered the most important process of hearing. Srimad-Bhagavatam is full of transcendental chanting of the holy name, and therefore the chanting and hearing of Srimad-Bhagavatam are transcendently full of mellows. (SB 7.5.23-24)

One can directly approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead simply by executing these nine kinds of devotional service, of which hearing about the Lord is the most important (श्रवणमिदं). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has very favorably stressed the importance of this process of hearing. According to His method, if people are simply given a chance to hear about Кесла, certainly they will gradually develop their dormant awareness, or love of Godhead. (Cc, Adi 7.141)

Also, this process looks like education which form we have been used to since our childhood. Indeed, although all nine methods of devotional service are educational, it is still possible to separate the process of learning one's relationship with the Lord from the activities performed in that relationship even though these activities are also educational on their own:

«Vedānta-sūtra (1.1.4) confirms this in the following words: tat tu samanvayāt. One can attain perfection in three stages. By understanding Vedic literature one can understand his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by performing the different processes one can approach Him, and at the end one can attain the supreme goal, who is no other than the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In this verse the purpose of the Vedas, the understanding of the Vedas, and the goal of the Vedas are clearly defined» (Bhagavad-gita, 15.15).

Pradyumna: Śrīla Prabhupada, you're saying we must know God before we can love Him. So that means devotional service is preceded by knowledge.

Śrīla Prabhupada: Yes, that is the process given in the Bhagavad-gita. There are eighteen chapters, and the whole eighteen chapters are education—how to know God. (Civilization and transcendence, chapter 12)

In this sense, education is genuinely based on sraṇam; to acquire spiritual knowledge should be a foundation of all other activities in devotional service. First one hears, then thinks and repeats, then begins to practice other active service; and finally, one becomes empowered to surrender oneself to the Lord. Although devotion is active in its nature and does not consist merely of acquiring intellectual understanding, there is no question of devotional service apart from knowledge. While all other forms of devotional service based on sraṇam enhance our ability to understand Krishna:

Because all these devotional activities are absolute, there is no fundamental difference between worshipping the Deity in the temple, seeing Him and chanting His glories. Indeed, all of these are ways of seeing Him, for everything done in devotional service is a means of direct contact with the Lord. (SB 7.4.25)

Although each process appears distinct, when one is situated on the absolute platform he can see that they are identical. For instance, hearing is as good as chanting, and remembering is as good as chanting or hearing. Similarly, engaging in Deity worship is as good as chanting, hearing or remembering. The devotee is expected to accept all nine processes of devotional

service, but even if only one process is properly executed, he can still attain the highest position (paramahansa) and go back home, back to Godhead. (Cc, Madhya 4.125)

And since the process of hearing is so crucial, let us have a look how Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the practice of hearing at two places when he systematically analyses all forms of devotional service:

An extract from Srimad Bhagavatam 7.5.23-24:

1. Śravaṇam. Hearing of the holy name of the Lord (śravaṇam) is the beginning of devotional service. Although any one of the nine processes is sufficient, in chronological order the hearing of the holy name of the Lord is the beginning. Indeed, it is essential. As enunciated by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*: by chanting the holy name of the Lord, one is cleansed of the material conception of life, which is due to the dirty modes of material nature. When the dirt is cleansed from the core of one's heart, one can realize the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead — *īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*. Thus by hearing the holy name of the Lord, one comes to the platform of understanding the personal form of the Lord. After realizing the Lord's form, one can realize the transcendental qualities of the Lord, and when one can understand His transcendental qualities one can understand the Lord's associates. In this way a devotee advances further and further toward complete understanding of the Lord as he awakens in realization of the Lord's holy name, transcendental form and qualities, His paraphernalia, and everything pertaining to Him. Therefore the chronological process is *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ*. This same process of chronological understanding holds true in chanting and remembering. When the chanting of the holy name, form, qualities and paraphernalia is heard from the mouth of a pure devotee, his hearing and chanting are very pleasing. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has forbidden us to hear the chanting of an artificial devotee or nondevotee.

Hearing from the text of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is considered the most important process of hearing. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is full of transcendental chanting of the holy name, and therefore the chanting and hearing of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam are transcendently full of mellows. The transcendental holy name of the Lord may be heard and chanted accordingly to the attraction of the devotee. One may chant the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, or one may chant the holy name of Lord Rāma or Nṛsiṃhadeva (*rāmādi-mūrtiṣu kalā-niyamena tiṣṭhan*). The Lord has innumerable forms and names, and devotees may meditate upon a particular form and chant the holy name according to his attraction. The best course is to hear of the holy name, form and so on from a pure devotee of the same standard as oneself. In other words, one who is attached to Kṛṣṇa should chant and hear from other pure devotees who are also attached to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The same principle applies for devotees attracted by Lord Rāma, Lord Nṛsiṃha and other forms of the Lord. Because Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate form of the Lord (*kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*), it is best to hear about Lord Kṛṣṇa's name, form and pastimes from a realized devotee who is particularly attracted by the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, great devotees like Śukadeva Gosvāmī have specifically described Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy name, form and qualities. Unless one hears about the holy name, form and qualities of the Lord, one cannot clearly

understand the other processes of devotional service. Therefore Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommends that one chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. *Param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*. If one is fortunate enough to hear from the mouth of realized devotees, he is very easily successful on the path of devotional service. Therefore hearing of the holy name, form and qualities of the Lord is essential.

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.5.11) there is this verse: “Verses describing the name, form and qualities of Anantadeva, the unlimited Supreme Lord, are able to vanquish all the sinful reactions of the entire world. Therefore even if such verses are improperly composed, devotees hear them, describe them and accept them as bona fide and authorized.” In this connection, Śrīdhara Svāmī has remarked that a pure devotee takes advantage of another pure devotee by trying to hear from him about the holy name, form and qualities of the Lord. If there is no such opportunity, he alone chants and hears the Lord’s holy name.

An extract from The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 10:

The beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service is hearing, in Sanskrit called śravaṇam. All people should be given the chance to come and join devotional parties so that they may hear. This hearing is very important for progressing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One who links his ears to the transcendental vibrations through aural reception quickly becomes purified and cleansed in the heart. Lord Caitanya has affirmed that this hearing is very important. It cleanses the heart of the contaminated soul so that he becomes quickly qualified to enter into devotional service and understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In the Garuḍa Purāṇa the stress on hearing is expressed very nicely. It is said there, “The state of conditioned life in the material world is just like that of a man lying unconscious, having been bitten by a snake. This is because both such unconscious states can be ended by the sound of a mantra.” When a man is snake-bitten he does not die immediately but first becomes unconscious and remains in a comatose condition. Anyone who is in the material world is also sleeping, as he is ignorant of his actual self or his actual duty and his relationship with God. So materialistic life means that one is bitten by the snake of māyā, illusion, and thus, without any Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is almost dead. Now, the so-called dead man bitten by a snake can be brought back to life by the chanting of some mantra. There are expert chanters of these mantras who can perform this feat. Similarly, one can be brought back into Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the deadly unconscious state of material life by hearing of the mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

In the Fourth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, twenty-ninth chapter, verse 40, the importance of hearing of the pastimes of the Lord is stated by Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīkṣit: “My dear King, one should stay at a place where the great ācāryas [holy teachers] speak about the transcendental activities of the Lord, and one should give aural reception to the nectarean river flowing from the moonlike faces of such great personalities. If someone eagerly continues to hear such transcendental sounds, then certainly he will become freed from all material hunger, thirst, fear and lamentation, as well as all illusions of material existence.”

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also recommended this process of hearing as a means of self-realization in the present age of Kali. In this age it is very difficult to follow thoroughly the regulative principles and studies of the Vedas which were formerly recommended. However, if one gives aural reception to the sound vibrated by great devotees and ācāryas, that alone will give him relief from all material contamination. Therefore it is the recommendation of Caitanya Mahāprabhu that one should simply hear from authorities who are actually devotees of the Lord. Hearing from professional men will not help. If we hear from those who are actually self-realized, then the nectarean rivers, like those which are flowing on the moon planet, will flow into our ears. This is the metaphor used in the above verse.

In the Twelfth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, third chapter, verse 15, it is stated, “A person who desires unalloyed devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is praised by transcendental sound vibrations, should always hear about His glorification and transcendental qualities. This will surely kill all kinds of inauspiciousness in the heart”».

Among other things it is worth to highlight the following thesis from this description, because its understanding helps us to move on towards the consistency in devotional service: meaningful devotional service without sravanam is impossible, and the best forms of sravanam are to hear the Holy Name and listen to the Scriptures such as Śrīmad Bhagavatam from the mouths of authoritative ācāryas. Sometimes devotees may feel that they need something practical rather than "philosophy," but we can see from this description that appropriate study of the Scriptures is already extremely practical as the foundation for all other activities in devotional service.

In addition, appropriate study of the Scriptures transforms the way we see the world, therefore our behavioural patterns are to be transformed:

A learned man treats all women except his wife as his mother, looks on others' property as garbage in the street, and treats others as he would treat his own self. These are the symptoms of a learned person as described by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita. This should be the standard for education. Education does not mean having academic degrees only. One should execute what he has learned in his personal life. (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 4.16.17)

What is the result of vidyā? Education means one becomes gentleman. That is the result of vidyā. If one is not a gentleman, then his learning is not accepted according to the Vedic literature. (Lecture on Bg, 4.14-19, 3 august 1966)

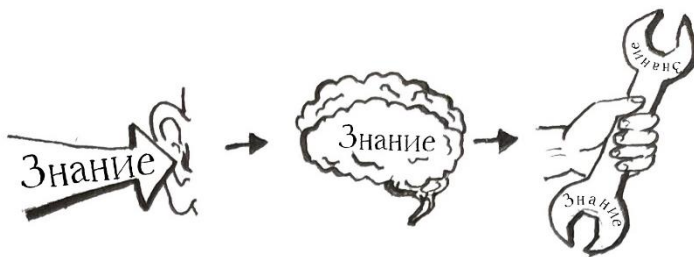
For example, a person who does not understand the difference between oneself and the body naturally behaves differently, since their behaviour is motivated by their worldview:

The separated, material energy bewilders the living entities (jīvas), and thus they work very hard under its influence, not knowing that they are not fulfilling their mission in life. Unfortunately, most of them think that they are the body and should therefore enjoy the material senses irresponsibly since when death comes everything will be finished. This atheistic

philosophy also flourished in India, where it was sometimes propagated by Cārvāka Muni. ... Cārvāka Muni, however, says, “If you have no money, then beg, borrow or steal, but in some way secure ghee and enjoy life.” For one who further objects that he will be held accountable for such unauthorized activities as begging, borrowing and stealing, Cārvāka Muni replies, “You will not be held responsible. As soon as your body is burned to ashes after death, everything is finished» (Caitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila 7.119).

Similarly, the subtler aspects of the Scriptures affect our worldview and consequently conduct of a devotee. Of course, it is important to observe the principle of continuity and we will discuss later, because some knowledge from the Scriptures that a devotee cannot yet relate to their life becomes a set of information with no potential to transform their conduct except, perhaps, potential to become proud of the amount of information in their head.

Meditation and Application of Knowledge



To make the knowledge bring us to even greater transformation in our daily lives we need a conscious practice of mindfulness through the prism of the Scriptures in addition to a natural transformation of our vision. The well-known classification of learning process

into three stages, sravanam, mananam, nidhidhyasanam, comes from Yajurveda: First, hearing a teacher, then meditating on the meaning (of his instructions) and meditation; it helps to achieve complete Awakening. Krishna also applies this principle (Bhagavad-gita, 18.63), “Thus I have explained to you knowledge still more confidential. Deliberate on this fully, and then do what you wish to do.” And Śrīla Prabhupāda says in his explanation of the principle of sastra-chakshu that a devotee should not only study the Scriptures but also look at the world through their prism, that is, to reflect on how this knowledge manifests in one’s life:

According to Vedic civilization, one has to see through the authority of the revealed Scriptures. Sastra-caksuh: one should see everything through the medium of the Vedic literature. (Cc, Madhya 12.184)

As soon as you become expert in hearing and chanting, then the next stage is smaraṇam. Smaraṇam, thinking of. Anything you speak or hear, later on you contemplate, you meditate, smaraṇam. So smaraṇam is the third stage. (Lecture, 28 april 1973)

In addition to meditation on what one hears, one must act in accordance with the learned knowledge. Just as *sravanam* and *kirtanam* are followed by *smaranam*, *pada-sevanam* goes after *smaranam* and then other devotional practices:

«Smaranam means trying to understand more and more about the Supreme Lord, and pada-sevanam means engaging oneself in serving the lotus feet of the Lord according to the time and circumstances. Arcanam means worshiping Lord Viṣṇu as one does in the temple, and vandanam means offering respectful obeisances. Man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī māṁ namaskuru. Vandanam means namaskuru — offering obeisances or offering prayers. Thinking oneself to be nitya-kṛṣṇa-dāsa, everlastingly a servant of Kṛṣṇa, is called dāsyam, and sakhyam means being a well-wisher of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa wants everyone to surrender unto Him because everyone is constitutionally His servant. Therefore, as a sincere friend of Kṛṣṇa, one should preach this philosophy, requesting everyone to surrender unto Kṛṣṇa. Ātma-nivedanam means offering Kṛṣṇa everything, including one’s body, mind, intelligence and whatever one may possess.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 7.5.23-24).

Śrīla Prabhupāda often emphasized the importance to practice devotional service:

«Simply theoretical knowledge, no practical application---he is not brāhmaṇa. ... Guṇa and karma. Karma means some act. ... You must act as a brāhmaṇa. Then you are brāhmaṇa.» (Lecture, 21 May, 1976).

«The devotees become uninterested in the material world not simply because of theoretical understanding but because of practical experience.» (Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, chapter 89).

«Jṣāna means theoretical knowledge, and vijṣāna refers to practical knowledge. For instance, a science student has to study theoretical scientific conceptions as well as applied science. Theoretical knowledge alone will not help. One has to be able to also apply this knowledge. Similarly, in yoga one should have not only theoretical knowledge but practical knowledge.» (Perfection of Yoga, chapter 5).

Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda actively engaged his disciples in various forms of devotional service, which we will discuss later in the description of the principle of continuity in education. However, we would like to present proof that Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized regular engagement:

Whether gṛhasthas, sannyasa or brahmacari everyone has to be completely engaged all the time in devotional service. That is the meaning of good management, to see that everyone is engaged 24 hours a day, and not sleeping unnecessarily or talking idly.” (SPL to Mukunda, 27th March, 1974)

Speaking of the service under the control of a spiritual teacher it is worth mentioning the role of so-called “interactive teaching”. As we will see later, it can be useful to cultivate the principle of

mindfulness. But interactive training can also be a form of the rest of the eight remaining practices (except *sravanam*) of devotional service “in miniature”. Thus, instead of practicing what they learned at home, in case they may understand something incorrectly or incompletely they do the same thing in a classroom in the presence of a teacher to correct them. In the classical system of education students used to live under the supervision of a teacher, and therefore a teacher could regularly observe students and correct them; and we will talk about later. And this is an ideal situation when an educational system is structured in such a way that a teacher has an opportunity to directly observe a student's conduct and how a student applies knowledge in practice. That way a teacher gets feedback and sees whether the knowledge is properly and fully absorbed. Śrīla Prabhupāda did the same thing with his disciples. He gave lectures, he encouraged them to read the Scriptures, but he also sent them out to do some service, and if the service was not done properly, he corrected his disciples.

Incorporation of so-called “interactive practices” into the educational process is a simplified version of students’ observation. This option can be applied when a teacher has no direct contact, or if it is necessary to test in simulated virtual circumstances how students absorb knowledge, because incorrect application of knowledge in life can create long-term negative consequences. However, within the framework of this principle all these practices should be a result of quality *sravanam*, a test of its quality but not a substitute. The point is not a name or a form; the point is to test *sravanam* and take students' consciousness to the next stages of immersion in it.

It is important to emphasize in this principle that spiritual education does not only provide new practices, but also transforms day-to-day mundane life of a person. Earlier, we have already quoted the first point of the mission of The League of Devotees and ISKCON society but with a slightly different emphasis. Now let us look at it through this prism:

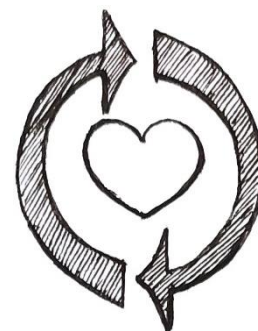
To educate the greater human society in the techniques of spiritual life as the basis for a balanced psychic and biological development, and thereby achieve for the first time in human society a real peace and unity among the contending forces in the world today.

Spiritual techniques, as Śrīla Prabhupāda worded them, serve a balanced mental and biological bodily development, that is, gross and subtle. It is not their only goal, as there are other points of the mission as well, but it is one of the areas of focus. Thus, it is always necessary to show how learnt spiritual knowledge can lead to particular changes in a person's lifestyle and conduct: in family life, at work, in everyday activities, in attitudes toward health, toward ecology, and so on.

The Srimad-Bhagavatam is the natural commentary on the Vedanta-sutra and offers solid education on how to conduct life perfectly. (Renunciation through wisdom, chapter 5.1).

Transformation of Character

We mentioned above the transformation of a devotee's worldview and conduct. But there is another practical aspect - an inner transformation of one's character. Undoubtedly, the key aspect of education is transformation of one's inner qualities.



Prabhupada: Oh, not with you? It is in the book. "Oh, my knowledge is in the book." No. You should learn. Everyone is missing. So how you can become saintly person? So those qualities, twenty-six qualities, they are called saintly person. Devotee means to become fully qualified with all the noble qualities. Devotee does not mean a rascal, at the same time, a devotee. No. As soon as you become devotee, the test is that all those twenty-six qualities will develop. You have to test yourself, "Out of the twenty-six qualities, how much I have developed?" If I am lacking, then you must know that you are not developing. This is the test. (Lecture, 24 november 1966)

However, several questions arise here. For example, does a devotee need to consciously develop some inner qualities, or do they come naturally as a result of one's *sravanam-kirtanam*? If they come naturally, how does the process work? And if they do not, does it mean that a devotee needs to practice something else in addition to *bhakti*? And does the development of certain qualities represent a sign of progress in devotional service?

One of the characteristics of pure devotional service is that it is beneficial to everyone; and in *The Nectar of Devotion* Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this quality from the perspective that all the qualities of the demigods are developed in a devotee (5.18.12), and he also writes about it in terms of education:

Prahlada Maharaja, however, being an exalted devotee, had acquired all the qualities of education. ... "One who has unflinching devotional faith in Krishna consistently manifests all the good qualities of Krishna and the demigods. (SB 7.5.5)

Any man who has genuine devotion to the Lord has all the good qualities which are found in godly persons or in the demigods, whereas the nondevotee, however advanced he may be in material qualifications by education and culture, lacks in godly qualities. (Bg 1.28)

What do *Srimad Bhagavatam* and Śrīla Prabhupāda mean when they say that non-devotees do not possess any good qualities?

«Even if he is adept at the practice of mystic yoga or the honest endeavor of maintaining his family and relatives, he must be driven by his own mental speculations and must engage in the service of the Lord's external energy. How can there be any good qualities in such a man?» (5.18.12).

Since such a person is still on a bodily platform, the core motive for one's conduct is personal interest. Usually, it is a desire for sensual pleasure. Although in more subtle forms it is based on ahankara, false conceptions of self, and however, it will eventually lead one to the same idea of sensual pleasures. Let us give a simple analogy. We do not think that a thief who wants to flatter us and steal from us, shows respect for us at that moment. Although it may appear so, but his ultimate interest lies elsewhere. The same can be said of a materially conditioned person. Even if one shows good qualities, one's core interest lies in sensual pleasures.

And even if one is affected by extended selfishness, such a person will not do any genuine favour willing to sacrifice everything in the pursuit of gratification of other people's senses. All the problems of this world come from a desire of sensual pleasures, whether it is mine or someone else's. One's own desire of sensual pleasures is not the problem, but the very concept that separate from the service to the Lord sensual pleasures are beneficial for living beings. And all qualities, subject to this worldview paradigm, only lead to more trouble, even they are most remarkable ones. And if a person is under the influence of one's quality, which seems good, they can only cause harm to others. If one only seems to do good, can we really say that this quality is good?

Prabhupada: Yes. Our so-called advancement of education means to live on the mental platform. Harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guna manorathena [SB 5.18.12]. They have no information of the spiritual platform. They... After bodily concept of life, the next platform is mental and intellectual concept of life. But spiritual life is beyond mental and intellectual concept of life. So unless one comes to the spiritual platform, even on mental and intellectual platform, he cannot do anything good to the society. Hm. (Lecture, 8 november 1972)

It is clear why ordinary material qualities are not good, even if they seem to be. However, we should not become impersonalists who believe that everything in this world is an illusion. We cannot deny the qualities themselves; they are present and real. Moreover, we can be inspired by them from materialists, when we realize that the energy of these qualities is the reflection of the energy of Krishna's original quality.

«Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, māyāvādī kṛṣṇe aparādhī: one who thinks that everything is māyā instead of thinking that everything is Kṛṣṇa is called an aparādhī, or offender» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 6.14.5).

But we should also realize that materialistic people end up completely devaluing the qualities because of a false foundation, like any number multiplied by zero. However, it should not instil in us a sense of superiority over other people but an understanding of the value of devotional service in relation to Krishna, and, as a result, an appreciation and respect for all other living beings, because they are inherent parts of Him but, unfortunately, they are also on the field of illusory activity.

Now it is necessary to understand that a devotee achieves all sublime qualities simply by practicing devotional service. Since a living being is an integral part of Krishna, it has a lot of the same qualities as the Lord. But when its original consciousness is covered by matter, these qualities cannot

manifest. When its consciousness is awakened, they manifest themselves as they are already a part of the nature of a soul:

«All living entities are part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, and therefore when they revive their original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they possess all the good qualities of Kṛṣṇa in a small quantity. When one engages himself in the nine processes of devotional service (śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam/ arcanam vandanaṁ dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam), one's heart becomes purified, and he immediately understands his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. He then revives his original quality of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.18.12).

However, awakening of consciousness and purification from all impurities takes place through the contact with the Lord:

So if we remain always with Kṛṣṇa, then we acquire the qualities of Kṛṣṇa. So God is all-good. Therefore I become good by association with God. It is very simple reasoning.. <...> The same example: if you remain with fire, you become warm, the quality of the fire. If you remain in sunshine, you become warm. And the more you remain, the more you become warmer, warmer. Then become hot. (Room Conversation with Two Buddhist Monks, 12 July 1973)

Does that mean we do not need to develop these qualities? Then, what was the reason Śrīla Prabhupāda established adherence to the four regulative principles as the standard for initiation? These are practices that are relevant to the development of asceticism, purity, charity, and truthfulness. Why was it impossible to establish chanting the Holy Name only as the standard?

When one becomes so disinterested in material enjoyment, he becomes fit for initiation by the spiritual master. For the advancement of spiritual life Srimad-Bhagavatam (6.1.13) prescribes: tapasa brahmacaryena samena ca damena ca. When a person is serious about accepting diksa, he must be prepared to practice austerity, celibacy and control of the mind and body. (NoI, 5)

The point is that there is a difference between developing a quality and its practice and practicing this quality in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Let us take asceticism as an example. Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.2.7 tells us that asceticism is a natural result of devotional service: “By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world.” Hence, we can see that we need to develop asceticism through any practice separate from bhakti.

One might think that it is not necessary to develop it, but that it should be practiced as a separate practice from bhakti. After all, it is prescribed by the Scriptures. Śrīla Prabhupāda responds to it in his commentary on the same verse:

«Those who consider devotional service to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be something like material emotional affairs may argue that in the revealed Scriptures, sacrifice, charity, austerity, knowledge, mystic powers and similar other processes of transcendental realization

are recommended. According to them, bhakti, or the devotional service of the Lord, is meant for those who cannot perform the high-grade activities. <....> But that is not the actual fact. The bhakti cult is the topmost of all transcendental activities, and therefore it is simultaneously sublime and easy. ... The other high-grade activities designated as sacrifice, charity, austerity, etc., are all corollary factors following the pure and scientific bhakti cult. ... The bhakti cult is meant for realization of the positive form. When the positive form is realized, the negative forms are automatically eliminated. Therefore, with the development of the bhakti cult, with the application of positive service to the positive form, one naturally becomes detached from inferior things, and he becomes attached to superior things. Similarly, the bhakti cult, being the supermost occupation of the living being, leads him out of material sense enjoyment. That is the sign of a pure devotee.».

Does it mean that a Vaishnava does not need asceticism and that one day it will just happen like manna from heaven? Another time Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the role of asceticism in spiritual practice of our society. As it has been said before, asceticism comes from devotional service. But a person renounces something for the sake of progress in devotion and, therefore, practices asceticism. One does not use it as such for the sake of renouncing something because it will elevate them spiritually, but one practices it to improve their devotional service. For example, one does not reduce the amount of sleep because subconsciously one believes that reducing sleep leads to spiritual progress. But one does it for the sake of more time to serve the Lord. And one is driven by the inner inspiration of devotional service, whether it be a process of sadhana-bhakti or its ultimate goal. In that case one's practice of asceticism also becomes devotional service.

Śrīla Prabhupada: Yes, under the direction of the spiritual master one should... You have no mind to follow austerities, but when you accept a spiritual master, you have to carry out his order. That is austerity.

Syamasundara: Even if you don't want to practice austerity, you must.

Śrīla Prabhupada: Yes, you must. Because you have surrendered to your spiritual master, his order is final. So even if you don't like it, you have to do it. To please me. (Perfect questions, perfect answers, part 6)

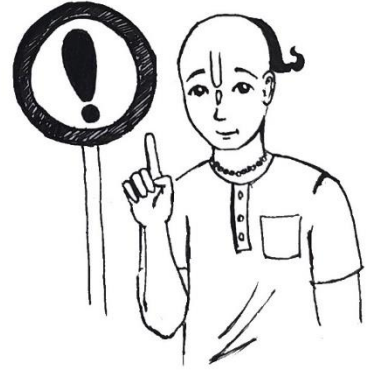
A similar practice is possible for the other qualities of a devotee which are listed in Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya lila, 22.78-80, and quoted in Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.18.12:

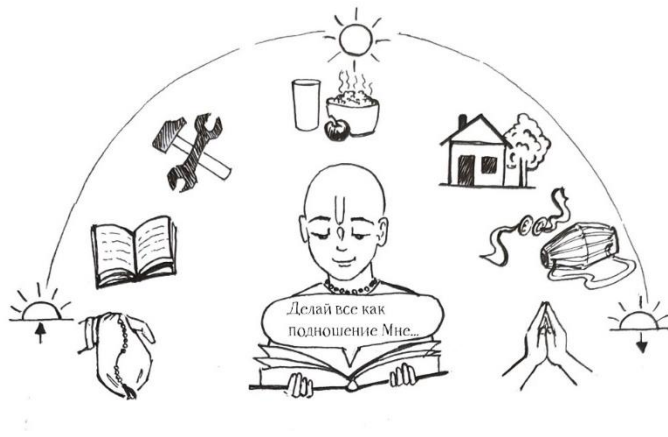
«Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja lists the following twenty-six good qualities of a Vaiṣṇava: (1) He is very kind to everyone. (2) He does not make anyone his enemy. (3) He is truthful. (4) He is equal to everyone. (5) No one can find any fault in him. (6) He is magnanimous. (7) He is mild. (8) He is always clean. (9) He is without possessions. (10) He works for everyone's benefit. (11) He is very peaceful. (12) He is always surrendered to Kṛṣṇa. (13) He has no material desires. (14) He is very meek. (15) He is steady. (16) He controls his senses. (17) He does not eat more than required. (18) He is not influenced by the Lord's illusory energy. (19) He offers respect to everyone. (20) He does not desire any respect for himself. (21) He is very grave. (22) He is merciful. (23) He is friendly. (24) He is poetic. (25) He is expert. (26) He is silent».

There is no need to develop these qualities as such, no need to practice them separately from bhakti, as it only diverts us from bhakti. But the practice of these qualities in connection with the Lord, when we associate them in our mind with improvement of the quality or quantity of devotional service to Him, is bhakti and therefore, such a practice is an essential part of the educational process.

Common Mistakes in Practicality of Education:

1. A tendency to shift the focus and lose the importance of the process of śravanam as the foundation of all other spiritual practices when other forms of devotional service somehow neglect hearing and chanting. Śravanam should also be regarded as an effective method to change one's worldview and to purify one's heart rather than as a preparatory stage that leads to direct practice. Especially in case when śhravanam-kirtanam processes are thought unnecessary for the one who already attained practice;
2. A lack of meditation and reflection on what has been heard, when a devotee does not try to see how received knowledge is manifested and applied in life; does not seek evidence of this knowledge in practice, etc.; does not try to practice the received knowledge according to time, place and circumstances; does not transform daily life by building a connection between new knowledge and various regularly performed actions;
3. Hearing topics that are not currently relevant to a practitioner's spiritual life. This error is a violation of the principle of continuity, but it also leads to a violation of the principle of practicality;
4. Attempt to develop a quality of the guna of goodness or to practice it as a goal rather than as a means to improve one's service to the Lord. It is also a mistake to regard non-devotees better than Vaishnavas if they exhibit material qualities which Vaishnava community may lack, or conversely, to disregard the exhibition of elevated qualities among the materialistically inclined.





Principle of Continuity in Education

Principle of continuity

Any living being exists in a constant educational process. It goes through the evolutionary cycle of consciousness, assuming various forms of life, and therefore, its consciousness is transformed by residing in this or that body. All living beings in a human body also continue their education, either through devotional service or through karma which delivers lessons from the Lord as well:

When he is forgetful of his real nature, he obtains education and enlightenment from the superior lessons of Krishna. (Bg 2.20)

Thus, continuity of education is another universal principle of existence. For devotees the essence of educational practice is expressed in the following lines of The Nectar of Devotion:

«We should always try to mold the activities of our lives in such a way that we will constantly remember Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whether one concentrates his mind on the four-handed form of Viṣṇu or on the form of two-handed Kṛṣṇa, it is the same. The Padma Purāṇa recommends: somehow or other always think of Viṣṇu, without forgetting Him under any circumstances. Actually this is the most basic of all regulative principles. For, when there is an order from a superior about doing something, there is simultaneously a prohibition. When the order is that one should always remember Kṛṣṇa, the prohibition is that one should never forget Him. Within this simple order and prohibition, all regulative principles are found complete.» (The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 2).

Krishna conveys the same message using slightly different words in one of the key verses of Bhagavad-gita:

«Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances to Me and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me.» (Bhagavad-gita, 9.34).

The principle of continuous meditation on Krishna unites these citations. One finds the principle of continuity of spiritual practice in the definition of pure devotional service in Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, 1.1.11, as well as in the description of the best dharma in Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.2.6. Therefore, if we want to make education effective, we need to incorporate the principle of continuity into it.

Usually in our society we provide a person with a general routine of a morning program, as well as an opportunity to come to meetings with devotees once or twice a week, or sometimes more often. But that takes very little time a week. What do devotees do the rest of the time? Some do devotional service on their own, some try to do it but don't succeed, and some don't even think about it. But each of those devotees is on their own. As a result, for many devotees we get a "weekend Vaishnava syndrome". Can you imagine how more effective our educational program would be if it offered devotees a realistic yet full immersion in devotional service, ideally for twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year? And we are not talking now about sannyasis and brahmacharis only.

It is also important to remember that education takes place at three levels: body, mind, and speech, which means that ideally all three should be constantly engaged.

«This means that one must accept a spiritual master who comes in the disciplic succession and is a servant of the servant of the Lord. Under his direction, one must then engage one's three properties, namely his body, mind and words. The body should be engaged in physical activity under the order of the master, the mind should think of Kṛṣṇa incessantly, and one's words should be engaged in preaching the glories of the Lord. If one is thus engaged in the loving service of the Lord, one's life is successful.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 6.11.24).

In this case the speech is an external indicator of the mind, and the occupation of the speech in devotional service is connected to the engagement of the mind in it accordingly.

We may see a person daily, but we cannot visualize his intelligence. We can understand that a person is intelligent, but we cannot see intelligence itself. When one talks, we can understand that there is intelligence at work. But why should we conclude that when the gross body is dead and no longer capable of talking, the intelligence is finished? The instrument for speech is the gross body, but we should not conclude that when the gross body is finished, intelligence is also finished. (Quest for enlightenment, 6a)

One may have some doubts. Is it possible to perform devotional service on a permanent basis? How is it possible to occupy the gross body, mind, and intellect permanently in such a way? Does the author suggest that we should all become like Haridas Thakur and devote all our time to chanting the Holy Names only?

Let us investigate the matter. Generally speaking, to follow the processes of sraavanam-kirtanam is sufficient to attain perfection in devotional service. That is, if one is fully engaged in this

process, one will attain perfection even if one does not follow any other practices of devotional service.

There are two systems of arcana—the bhāgavata system and pāñcarātrikī system. In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam there is no recommendation of pancaratrika worship because in this Kali-yuga, even without Deity worship, everything can be perfectly performed simply through hearing, chanting, remembering and worship of the lotus feet of the Lord. (SB 7.5.23-24)

Yet a devotee has every opportunity to immerse oneself regularly in this process by constantly occupying one's mind with hearing, praise, and remembrance. One may chant the Holy Name along with other activities; one may hear regularly about the Lord especially with the help of electronic devices; and as discussed earlier one may meditate more during the day on events that happen to them through the prism of what one hears. For example, meeting different people at work to remember consciously that each of them is an integral part of the Lord, and to behave accordingly to a verse read that day on this subject. These ways alone do not make it difficult to occupy most of our time.

So anyway, we should always engage ourself twenty-four hours. Kirtaniyah sada harih [Cc. Ḍḍi 17.31]. Here it said, sravanam kirtanam, but Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, kirtaniyam sada harih. Sada means twenty-four hours. We shall mold our life in such a way that... If somebody says, "How it is possible? We have got other business. How it is possible to simply engage in sravanam kir...?" Therefore smaranam. Whatever you are hearing, you should remember it. That is very easy. (Lecture, 31 march 1976)

Acharyas instruct this way of remembrance in addition to hearing and chanting for devotees who live in the socium and have many different responsibilities:

Always, twenty-four hours, we have to mold our activities of life in such way that we can remember it twenty-four hours. How it is possible? Yes, it is possible. It is possible. A very crude example is set by the ḍcḍryas in this connection. And what is that example? It is said that a woman who is attached to another man, although she has got a husband, still, she's attached to another man. And this sort of attachment becomes very strong. This is called parakiya-rasa. Either in case of man or woman. If man has got attachment for another woman besides his wife, or a woman has got attachment for another man besides her husband, that attachment is very strong. That attachment is very strong. So the ḍcḍryas give this example as a bad character woman who has got attachment for other's husband, she always thinks, at the same time, shows her husband that she is very much busy in the family affairs so that her husband may not doubt her character. So as she is always remembering the time of meeting with her lover at night, in spite of doing all this household work very nicely, similarly one has to remember the supreme husband, Sri Кесла, always in spite of doing his material duties very nicely. That is possible. It requires a strong sense of love. When you have got a strong sense of love for the Supreme Lord, then it is possible that we can go on discharging our duty, at the same time remember the Lord. So we have to develop that sense. ... It is simply a question of practice. And that practice can be

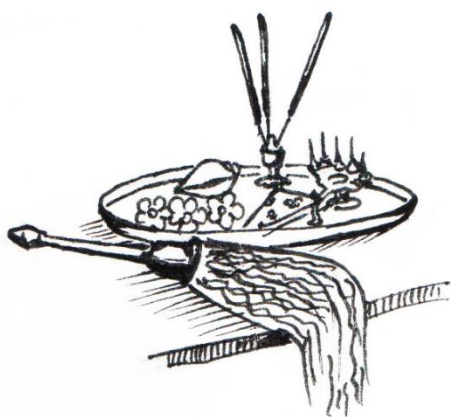
very easily possible by the devotional process, *зrавалаа. Зrавалаа*. The easiest process is to hear. ... These nine processes. So the easiest process is simply hearing. Hearing of this Bhagavad-gita or Srimad-Bhagavatam from the realized person, that will train up oneself, one, into the thoughts of the Supreme Being twenty-four hours, which will lead one ultimately, *antakale*, to remember the Supreme Lord, and thus leaving this body, he will have a spiritual body, a spiritual body, just fit for association with the Lord. (Lecture, 19-20 february 1966).

However, it is important to remember that the only core is hearing and chanting. Only a sun powered with energy warms up the solar system, not something cold. Likewise, only a person powered with spiritual energy of hearing and chanting is able to spiritualize the rest of their activity during the day:

«Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has given us an authorized program for this purpose, centered around the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. This chanting has so much power that it immediately attaches one to Kṛṣṇa. That is the beginning of sādhana-bhakti. Somehow or other, one has to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa. The great saint Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, although a responsible king, fixed his mind on Kṛṣṇa, and similarly anyone who tries to fix his mind in this way will very rapidly make progress in successfully reviving his original Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» (The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 2).

Therefore, education for devotees should always have the strongest possible foundation of spiritual energy of hearing and chanting. Sufficient time should be given to it in the education of devotees at any stage of their spiritual development.

Variety of Educational Practises



(SB 4.8.52)

Let us move on. In addition to the practice of hearing and chanting in the day and age of Kali Acharyas recommend that we should engage in the service related to the Deity worship, since such engagement enables us to concentrate our minds on the Lord more or, rather, helps us not to forget Him:

The arcana-marga, or the devotional path prescribed in the Pañcarātra system of devotional service for worshiping the Deity in the temple, makes the devotee think constantly of the Lord; that is samadhi, or trance.

It is therefore recommended that initiated devotees follow the principles of Nārada Pañcarātra by worshiping the Deity in the temple. Especially for householder devotees who are opulent in material possessions, the path of Deity worship is strongly recommended. ... Gṛhastha devotees, however, are generally engaged in material activities, and therefore if they do not take to Deity

worship, their falling down is positively assured. Deity worship means following the rules and regulations precisely. That will keep one steady in devotional service. ... The answer is that even though the chanting of the holy name is sufficient to enable one to progress in spiritual life to the standard of love of Godhead, one is nonetheless susceptible to contamination because of possessing a material body. Consequently, special stress is given to the arcana-vidhi. One should therefore regularly take advantage of both the bhāgavata process and pāṣcarātrikī process. (SB 7.5.23-24)

By virtue of the principles of Pancharatra one no longer brushes one's teeth or does ablutions for nothing, but because firstly, it keeps the body, which one can engage in devotional service, healthy; and secondly, one lives the way that pleases Krishna. Just as inhabitants of the spiritual world dress for Krishna, a devotee performs the same activities for Krishna's pleasure, if one is mindful of it. The only difference is that inhabitants of the spiritual world do it spontaneously and perfectly, while a sadhana-bhakti practitioner does it out of duty and as best as one can. By acting in this way during the day, through the Pancharatra system of Deity worship, a devotee can spiritualize many aspects of their life that could not be possible without it:

The great sage Nārada's mission is to broadcast the devotional service of the Lord. For this purpose he has compiled the Nārada Pañcarātra, a directory of devotional service, so that devotees can always take information about how to execute devotional service and thus engage twenty-four hours a day in performing sacrifices for the pleasure of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (SB 4.13.4)

This understanding of the role of Pancharatra together with the path of Bhagavata Marga, gives us the key outlined in the sixth chapter of The Nectar of Devotion:

«The sixty-four items of devotional service should include all of our activities of body, mind and speech. As stated in the beginning, the regulative principle of devotional service enjoins that all of our senses must be employed in the service of the Lord. Exactly how they can be thus employed is described in the above sixty-four items.»

Also in chapter six, Śrīla Prabhupāda lists all these principles, and in chapters seven through thirteen he comments on each of them, so you should refer to those chapters for more detailed descriptions. Here we will give only a list of all educational practices from chapter six:

«He mentions the basic principles as follows: (1) accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master, (2) becoming initiated by the spiritual master and learning how to discharge devotional service from him, (3) obeying the orders of the spiritual master with faith and devotion, (4) following in the footsteps of great ācāryas (teachers) under the direction of the spiritual master, (5) inquiring from the spiritual master how to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, (6) being prepared to give up anything material for the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa (this means that when we are engaged in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, we must be prepared to give up something that we may not like to

give up, and also we have to accept something that we may not like to accept), (7) residing in a sacred place of pilgrimage like Dvārakā or Vṛndāvana, (8) accepting only what is necessary, or dealing with the material world only as far as necessary, (9) observing the fasting day on Ekādaśī and (10) worshiping sacred trees like the banyan tree.

These ten items are preliminary necessities for beginning the discharge of devotional service in regulative principles. In the beginning, if a neophyte devotee observes the above-mentioned ten principles, surely he will quickly make good advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The next set of instructions is listed as follows: (1) One should rigidly give up the company of nondevotees. (2) One should not instruct a person who is not desirous of accepting devotional service. (3) One should not be very enthusiastic about constructing costly temples or monasteries. (4) One should not try to read too many books, nor should one develop the idea of earning his livelihood by lecturing on or professionally reciting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam or Bhagavad-gītā. (5) One should not be neglectful in ordinary dealings. (6) One should not be under the spell of lamentation in loss or jubilation in gain. (7) One should not disrespect the demigods. (8) One should not give unnecessary trouble to any living entity. (9) One should carefully avoid the various offenses in chanting the holy name of the Lord or in worshiping the Deity in the temple. (10) One should be very intolerant toward the blasphemy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, or His devotees.

Without following the above-mentioned ten principles, one cannot properly elevate himself to the platform of sādhana-bhakti, or devotional service in practice. Altogether, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī mentions twenty items, and all of them are very important. Out of the twenty, the first three – namely, accepting the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, taking initiation from him and serving him with respect and reverence – are the most important. The next important items are as follows: (1) One should decorate the body with tilaka, which is the sign of the Vaiṣṇavas. (The idea is that as soon as a person sees these marks on the body of the Vaiṣṇava, he will immediately remember Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya said that a Vaiṣṇava is he who, when seen, reminds one of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, it is essential that a Vaiṣṇava mark his body with tilaka to remind others of Kṛṣṇa.) (2) In marking such tilaka, sometimes one may write Hare Kṛṣṇa on the body. (3) One should accept flowers and garlands that have been offered to the Deity and the spiritual master and put them on one's body. (4) One should learn to dance before the Deity. (5) One should learn to bow down immediately upon seeing the Deity or the spiritual master. (6) As soon as one visits a temple of Lord Kṛṣṇa, one must stand up. (7) When the Deity is being borne for a stroll in the street, a devotee should immediately follow the procession. (In this connection it may be noted that in India, especially in Viṣṇu temples, the system is that apart from the big Deity who is permanently situated in the main area of the temple, there is a set of smaller Deities that are taken in procession in the evening. In some temples it is the custom to hold a big procession in the evening with a band playing and a nice big umbrella over the Deities, who sit on decorated thrones on the cart or palanquin, which is carried by devotees. The Deities come out onto the street and travel in the neighborhood while the people of the neighborhood come out to offer prasāda. The residents of the neighborhood all follow the procession, so it is a very nice scene. When the Deity is coming out, the servitors in the temple

put forward the daily accounts before Them: so much was the collection, so much was the expenditure. The whole idea is that the Deity is considered to be the proprietor of the whole establishment, and all the priests and other people taking care of the temple are considered to be the servants of the Deity. This system is very, very old and is still followed. So therefore it is mentioned here that when the Deity is on stroll the people should follow behind.) (8) A devotee must visit a Viṣṇu temple at least once or twice every day, morning and evening. (In Vṛndāvana this system is followed very strictly. All the devotees in town go every morning and evening to visit different temples. Therefore during these times there are considerable crowds all over the city. There are about five thousand temples in Vṛndāvana city. Of course it is not possible to visit all the temples, but there are at least one dozen very big and important temples, which were started by the Gosvāmīs and which should be visited.)

(9) One must circumambulate the temple building at least three times. (In every temple there is an arrangement to go around the temple at least three times. Some devotees go around more than three times – ten times, fifteen times – according to their vows. The Gosvāmīs used to circumambulate Govardhana Hill.) One should also circumambulate the whole Vṛndāvana area. (10) One must worship the Deity in the temple according to the regulative principles. (Offering āraṭi and prasāda, decorating the Deity, etc. – these things must be observed regularly.) (11) One must render personal service to the Deities. (12) One must sing. (13) One must perform saṅkīrtana. (14) One must chant. (15) One must offer prayers. (16) One must recite notable prayers. (17) One must taste mahā-prasāda (food from the very plate offered before the Deities). (18) One must drink caraṇāmṛta (water from the bathing of the Deities, which is offered to guests). (19) One must smell the incense and flowers offered to the Deity. (20) One must touch the lotus feet of the Deity. (21) One must see the Deity with great devotion. (22) One must offer āraṭi (ārātrika) at different times. (23) One must hear about the Lord and His pastimes from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhagavad-gītā and similar books. (24) One must pray to the Deity for His mercy. (25) One should remember the Deity. (26) One should meditate upon the Deity. (27) One should render some voluntary service. (28) One should think of the Lord as one's friend. (29) One should offer everything to the Lord. (30) One should offer a favorite article (such as food or a garment). (31) One should take all kinds of risks and perform all endeavors for Kṛṣṇa's benefit. (32) In every condition, one should be a surrendered soul. (33) One should pour water on the tulasī tree. (34) One should regularly hear Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and similar literature. (35) One should live in a sacred place like Mathurā, Vṛndāvana or Dvārakā. (36) One should offer service to Vaiṣṇavas (devotees). (37) One should arrange one's devotional service according to one's means. (38) In the month of Kārttika (October and November), one should make arrangements for special services. (39) During Janmāṣṭamī (the time of Kṛṣṇa's appearance in this world) one should observe a special service. (40) One should do whatever is done with great care and devotion for the Deity. (41) One should relish the pleasure of Bhāgavatam reading among devotees and not among outsiders. (42) One should associate with devotees who are considered more advanced. (43) One should chant the holy name of the Lord. (44) One should live in the jurisdiction of Mathurā».

First of all, it is worth noting that this list is quite extensive and already provides great variety for our educational activities. We can ask students to reflect on the Scriptures and try to see the

world through this prism, and we can do at any given time. In addition to it, we even have a broader range of other educational practices that we can use as well. Please, study a detailed description of these angas in The Nectar of Devotion, and you will see what a vast expanse of devotional service manifests itself.

One might think it is strange that, for example, to bow to a banyan tree is an educational process. It is just a symptom of a worshipper's blatant ignorance for a conditioned person from an ordinary society, especially if that person assumes to gain knowledge through such bowing. And we ourselves may not yet be completely free from the cultural influences instilled in us by world society before Krishna consciousness. Because we have already partially transformed our perception of the world, we may understand that real education is not about knowing the facts of history such as the Roman Empire. But we may still think that the study of the Scriptures is the only the process of education, and that all other practices are its consequences. There is no doubt that the study of the Scriptures is a part of learning, but it is only one of the many educational processes listed above. We have already said that this process plays a fundamental and crucial role in the whole process of education. But it is important to understand that education is not limited to the study of the Scriptures.

«In the Vedānta-sūtra (3.2.26) this is also described in the following words: prakāśāś ca karmaṇy abhyāsāt. “Devotional service is so potent that simply by engaging in the activities of devotional service one becomes enlightened without a doubt .”». (Bhagavad-gita, 9.2)

«The Institute should not only stress book study but there must be equal time given to kirtana, arati, prasadam, etc. There must be spiritual life, then book study will have meaning.» (SPL to Rupanuga, 11 January, 1976).

As an important conclusion, we can say that if we play any role of educators of spiritual knowledge, it is important for us to understand that students' participation in devotional practices is also an educational process. Therefore, these practices need to be incorporated into our meetings with students and their lives outside of the classroom through various "homework" activities. Of course, it depends on our credentials and qualifications, but at the very least, designers of educational systems in a community or a project should definitely consider this factor and include it in the educational process. Not to narrow it down to classroom instructions but to make it full and multifaceted. Ideally, everyone who in one way or another takes responsibility for spiritual training of others should either create their own comprehensive program for their students or mentees; or harmoniously integrate into a broader program which various parts are already successfully aligned with one another as an integrated whole, rather than as a multitude of disparate projects that students are to "bind together" in their own lives.

Therefore, we can engage all spare time of a devotee in devotional service. And given that many of the practices require no extra time and are like an internal part of a devotee's life alongside with an external life, we can occupy devotees' minds when their bodies do other things. For example,

«One should not give up anything that can be utilized in the service of the Lord. That is a secret of devotional service. Anything that can be utilized in advancing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service should be accepted. For instance, we are using many machines for the advancement of our present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, machines like typewriters, dictating machines, tape recorders, microphones and airplanes. Sometimes people ask us, “Why are you utilizing material products if you condemn the advancement of material civilization?” But actually we do not condemn. We simply ask people to do whatever they are doing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the same principle on which, in Bhagavad-gītā, Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna to utilize his fighting abilities in devotional service. Similarly, we are utilizing these machines for Kṛṣṇa’s service. With such sentiment for Kṛṣṇa, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we can accept everything. If the typewriter can be utilized for advancing our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we must accept it. Similarly, the dictating machine or any other machine must be used. Our vision is that Kṛṣṇa is everything. Kṛṣṇa is the cause and effect, and nothing belongs to us. Kṛṣṇa’s things must be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa. That is our vision.» (The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 14).

If one of two material objects is more materially pleasing or beautiful and yet its use would enhance our devotional service, that object is accepted rather than rejected under the pretext that it stimulates sensual pleasures:

Prabhupada: Yes. So long I have got this physical body, I have to give some physical facility. Yukta-vairāgya. If I can write my books in a comfortable place, why shall I voluntarily go to a dark place? Material facilities, either dark place or lighted place, it is the same thing, but I'll have to accept which is favorable for me. (Interview, 14 July 1976)

It must be understood that an object must be accepted to serve the Lord not for one's own comfort, which may or may not have a positive or negative effect on our devotional service. That is, the measure of our contact with an object will not be our comfort or discomfort but improvement or degradation of our devotional service.

If one engages all material things in relation with the loving service of the Lord, one is situated in yukta-vairāgya, proper renunciation. In this material world, nothing should be accepted for one's sense gratification: everything should be accepted for the service of the Lord. This is the mentality of the spiritual world. (SB 9.9.47)

Thus, the Gosvami of Vrindavana led an extremely ascetic life, virtually conquering all bodily needs, including the need for sleep and food. They had almost nothing to use in their service because they were already fully absorbed in it. And of course, they did not try to take anything for their sensual pleasure. However, an average devotee is not at the level where they can easily follow the same practices that the Gosvami of Vrindavana did.

«The Gosvamis, they conquered over these things. Nidrahara-vihara. That is required. That is spiritual life. If you are embarrassed with these four things, ahara-nidra-bhaya-maithunam ca,

then we are not making progress in spiritual life. It should be reduced. Just like Raghunatha dasa Gosvami did. All the Gosvamis—they had no business. But that is very difficult. If one has to imitate the behavior of Rupa Gosvami and all the Gosvamis, it is very difficult. Therefore yukta-vairāgya.» (Lecture 22 January 1975).

Therefore, a more renounced (in devotional service) person's duty is to adapt external conditions for less mature persons so they can engage in devotional service according to their level of conditionality without being distracted by material discomfort. Therefore, a person's engagement in devotional service with an attachment to material enjoyment is more important than their efforts to practice tapasya if it eventually disrupts devotional service.

«According to Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, haṁsa-śaraṇam refers to the cottage in which saintly persons live. Generally a saintly person lives in a remote place in the forest or in a humble cottage. However, we should note that the times have changed. It may be beneficial for a saintly person's own interest to go to the forest and live in a cottage, but if one becomes a preacher, especially in Western countries, he has to invite many classes of men who are accustomed to living in comfortable apartments. Therefore in this age a saintly person has to make proper arrangements to receive people and attract them to the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, perhaps for the first time, introduced motorcars and palatial buildings for the residence of saintly persons just to attract the general public in big cities. One should not be attached to material opulence, but material opulence may be accepted in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to facilitate the propagation of the movement. In other words, material opulence may be accepted as yukta-vairāgya, that is, for renunciation» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.29.55).

It is difficult for people in modern civilization, including devotees, to accept the very idea of total renunciation from the world or from anything very dear to them, because such renunciation suits the lifestyle of a pure Vaishnava. For example, a sannyasi's way of life is considered favourable for spiritual life, but what would be the reaction of most Vaishnavas, if they were asked to accept it now? Not to accept external status, not to escape responsibility but precisely to sacrifice their material attachments for the highest benefit of mankind. Those who are not ready will either be scared because they are afraid to part with their attachments, or they will take up this level of practice blindly, fail to comply with it and eventually fall and go back to their old way of life. Therefore, yukta-vairāgya means not only that we choose the most suitable material form for devotional service and engage it, but also that unwilling to change external conditions a person connects one's current position with the Lord without changing anything externally and engages one's attachments in the service to the Lord.

«So that is a, a very, not very nice proposal to the materially advanced world at this present moment. People will not accept it. Therefore this process, transcendental... Yukta-vairāgya. It is called yukta-vairāgya. You just remain in your place. This is the facility of this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. You haven't got to change your place. You remain. You are student; you remain a student. You are businessman; you remain businessman.

You are woman, man, or anyone, any, black, white, anyone—you remain in your position. Simply you try to hear. Sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhiḥ. You just remain in your position. You simply hear. Kindly give your aural reception to this transcendental sound. Very simple process.» (Lecture, 30 April 1969)

«Guest: Supposing if I were to become a devotee and I might be influenced to try to live like Śiva because richness doesn't appeal to me. But the problem is that in a country like this the winter is extremely cold, and if I try to live like Śiva I would freeze to death. So...

Prabhupāda: I have understood. I have understood. Kṛṣṇa consciousness does not mean that you falsely make some attempt. The... Just like Arjuna. Arjuna understood the Kṛṣṇa philosophy, and it does not mean that he became a naked fakir and went away from the fighting place, and without any clothing he began to travel. Is it that? No. The only thing is that he changed the account. The account was on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. So you haven't got to make such renunciation that you have to live underneath a tree or give up your dress, become naked. No. That is not... You have misunderstood. You should dress himself properly, you should eat properly, you should work properly, but not on your account, but Kṛṣṇa's account. That is the thing. That's all. Nirbandhe kṛṣṇa-sambandhe yukta-vairāgya ucyate.» (Lecture, 14 July 1968)

In this case a material attachment itself is not a problem, it may be present in one's activities. For example, one may remain attached to material comforts. Using something in the service to the Lord a person should not immediately renounce this attachment in the heart. A person engages it in the service to the Lord because such an attachment exists in the heart. If one follows the process, that attachment will eventually become pure. For example, an apartment where a person lives. One may not be ready to live with the family under a tree in a nearby park, so one is attached to their own property. But a person is ready to install Deities and make them the centre of the apartment and regularly invite Vaishnavas for ishta goshtas and other spiritual programs. Or, on a subtle level, one is not ready yet to renounce honour and therefore, aspires to advance in a career in ISKCON. But if the methods are correct, then a person can purify their heart by practicing bhakti more intensely, not playing political games and connecting one's desire for honour with Krishna consciousness. The power of devotional service is extraordinary, one can try to make a material career in ISKCON and still progress spiritually.

We are lusty for doing something for our sense gratification. The same desire, same propensity, can be utilized for serving Kṛṣṇa. Just like we are writing books, keeping night, whole night. So for an old man like me, it is tedious. But we are doing for Kṛṣṇa. So similarly, another author may be writing whole night for some sex literature. So the labor for producing a sex literature and the labor for producing a Bhāgavata is the same. It may be same ambition that "Let me become a big author. My name will be very popular." But one thing is being done for Kṛṣṇa; one thing is being done for sense gratification. So that propensity of becoming a reputed author or the labor, this, same, but it is being utilized for different purposes. Similarly, you take anything, if you use it for... (Room Conversation, 23 June, 1975)

However, there is a key point: it must be done under the guidance of the seniors who are able to select appropriate practices. We will talk more about it later in this section.

«Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, then, recommends that one should not be attached to material sense enjoyment but should accept everything enjoyable that is in relationship to Kṛṣṇa. For example, eating is necessary, and one wants some palatable dishes to satisfy his sense of taste. So in that case, for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa rather than for the satisfaction of the tongue, some palatable dishes may be prepared and offered to Kṛṣṇa. Then it is renunciation. Let the palatable dishes be prepared, but unless they are offered to Kṛṣṇa one should not accept them for eating. This vow of rejecting anything that is not offered to Kṛṣṇa is actually renunciation. And by such renunciation one is able to satisfy the demands of the senses.» (Nectar of Devotion, chapter 14).

«Jnanam means we are misidentifying that "I am this body, and the bodily emanations, my sons, my daughters... I have got bodily relation with my wife. Therefore my wife, and the productions, the sons, then grandsons, then daughter-in-laws, then son-in-laws..." In this way, we are clustering round. So that should be not rejected at once, but it should be taken into Krishna consciousness. Then even there is attachment, that is called yukta-vairagya, yukta-vairagya.» (Conversation 21 April 1974).

A conditioned soul is tempted to chase two birds with one stone, both spiritual development and material enjoyment. Thus, a person does not engage their attachments in devotional service to purify them but uses them and, therefore, remains at the same level of attachment to matter over time. In turn, it will cause temptation to use the principle of yukta-vairagya to justify one's own sensual pleasures. That is, one does not really connect things with the Lord. For example, a person may assume that in terms of yukta-vairagya principle it is okay to actively earn money to buy an expensive and comfortable apartment and once a year host a couple of devotees. At the same time, one could very easily reject a high-cost apartment with no loss to their Krishna consciousness, but one keeps making efforts to enjoy that object under the pretext of yukta-vairagya.

«The difficulty is that the people in this country, they want to continue their practice of sense gratification, and at the same time they want to become transcendently advanced. This is quite contradictory. One can advance in transcendental life by process of negativating the general practice of materialistic life. The exact adjustment is in Vaisnava philosophy, which is called Yukta Vairagya, means that we should simply accept the bare necessities of our material part of life, and try to save time for spiritual advancement. This should be the motto of New Vrindaban, if you at all develop it to the perfectional stage. And I am always at your service to help you by practical suggestion and assistance also» (SPL to Hayagriva, June 14 1968).

«In order to render service to the Lord, one may accept necessary things. If one lives in this way, he may actually become renounced. In the Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.108), it is said: "The bare necessities of life must be accepted, but one should not superfluously increase his necessities. Nor should they be unnecessarily decreased. One should simply accept what is necessary to help one advance spiritually." In his Durgama-saṅgamanī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī

comments that the word *sva-nirvāhaḥ* actually means *sva-sva-bhakti-nirvāhaḥ*. The experienced devotee will accept only those material things that will help him render service to the Lord» (Caitanya-charitamrita, Madhya 16.238).

Apart from this temptation, people's minds tend to be attracted to external things. And so, by engaging in devotional service at that moment they may still forget the essence and the purpose of doing it, even if they do not do it for themselves. For example, if building a temple as a society mission, one forgets sadhana and sacrifices other fundamental things for the sake of building a temple and does not keep in mind the purpose to serve Krishna, then to build a temple becomes a goal as such. As a result, a person may "keep playing" with external energy and their focused on external energy consciousness shifts from service to enjoyment. Or, not experiencing promised spiritual satisfaction from one's activity, one may reject it as something external and material, even though it might positively improve the quality of devotional service in the mission of a spiritual master.

«Prabhupada: That is the basic principle. If you lose your energy, then it is everything is lost. And to keep the energy intact, you must be very strict in following the principles.

Gurudasa: Subala Maharaja was joking with me that I am wanting to preach but instead I am just thinking of steel and cement.

Prabhupada: Huh?

Gurudasa: Subala Maharaja was joking with me that I am wanting to preach, but instead I am thinking about steel and cement and bricks.

Prabhupada: No. If that steel, cement, and bricks are meant for preaching, then it is all right. But if there is difficulty, then sometimes we become absorbed in steel-cement. Steel-cement is not bad, provided it is meant for preaching. That is also spiritual. Nirbandhe krsna sambandhe yukta-vairagya. But because we are materialistic, sometimes steel and cement attracts us more than Krishna. So this Bombay affair is giving me a little depression. Because so highly thought of, now these people they do not want to stay there. Just like this Maharaja, Dinanatha, they do not wish to return. Something has to be done.

Gurudasa: Actually it is not only one or two isolated cases.

Prabhupada: There are many. I have studied all of them.

Gurudasa: If it was one or two isolated cases, one can think maybe it is personal difficulty, but it is many cases.

Prabhupada: No, this is due to mismanagement. It is due to mismanagement. Proper leader» (Conversation, 27 October 1972).

Both these factors, temptation to misuse the principle and distraction to something external, require proper guidance. Without it, for inexperienced devotees it is impossible to apply yukta-vairagya accurately and as a result to remain steadfast in devotional service. Nor is it possible because a degree of attachment to various material objects and activities may vary from country to country and even from person to person. So, there are no general rules as to when we should renounce something and when we should not. A devotee may think that there is one pattern of conduct for all devotees, but the process varies according to their spiritual level and their degree of attachment to

matter. Only a spiritual teacher can adjust the process for aspiring Vaishnavas so that it works to elevate consciousness.

«To broadcast the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one has to learn the possibility of renunciation in terms of country, time and candidate. A candidate for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western countries should be taught about the renunciation of material existence, but one would teach candidates from a country like India in a different way. The teacher (ācārya) has to consider time, candidate and country. He must avoid the principle of niyamāgraha — that is, he should not try to perform the impossible. What is possible in one country may not be possible in another. The ācārya's duty is to accept the essence of devotional service. There may be a little change here and there as far as yukta-vairāgya (proper renunciation) is concerned» (Chaitanya-caritamṛta, Madhya, 23.105).

«One who acts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness under superior direction is called yukta. The technical term is yukta-vairāgya.» (Bhagavad-gīta, 9.28).

Thus, it is impossible for devotees who are at the first stages of spiritual development to apply the process of yukta-vairāgya correctly without accepting proper guidance. The process would regularly fail either in the direction of material attachment or in the direction of false renunciation.

«Narottama dasa Thakura states that one has to ascertain the right path for his activities by following in the footsteps of great saintly persons and books of knowledge under the guidance of a spiritual master (sadhu-sastra-guru-vakya). A saintly person is one who follows the Vedic injunctions, which are the orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The word guru refers to one who gives proper direction under the authority of the Vedic injunctions and according to the examples of the lives of great personalities. The best way to mold one's life is to follow in the footsteps of the authorized personalities like those mentioned herein by Prthu Maharaja, beginning with Svayambhuva Manu. The safest path in life is to follow such great personalities, especially those mentioned in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (4.21.28-29).

To Connect Everyday Life with Bhakti

We have discussed the principle of yukta-vairāgya in theory, let us try to extract specific practical outcomes.



Any object can relate to Krishna consciousness, but not every activity can be transformed into pure devotional service. Alcohol can be engaged in devotional service. But usage of intoxicating substances, including alcohol, cannot be turned into devotional service. Although even it may be connected with Krishna consciousness through the addition of devotional service.

«Even you are a drunkard, you are fond of tasting wine, I should recommend that you simply think that "This taste of wine is Kṛṣṇa." That will make a yogi of you. That will make you the greatest yogi. If you simply think this, that "I am tasting wine. Oh, very nice taste. This is Kṛṣṇa." Is there any loss if you think like that? This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» (Lecture, 8 September 1973).

So, all living being's activities are either karma or vikarma (as well as akarma):

«Prescribed duties authorized by revealed scripture are called karma, whereas the failure to execute one's highest duty is called akarma. The performance of forbidden activities is called vikarma. Thus karma, akarma and vikarma are established by the authorized explanations of Vedic literature» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 11.3.43).

Karma includes prescribed duties, human nature (talents, etc.), and sensual pleasures which are not prohibited by the Scriptures. All of them must be connected with the Lord through yukta-vairagya. For example, we tend to be out in the wild, we have an attachment to nature. It is still a sensual pleasure, albeit it is in goodness. So, it must be connected with remembrance of the Lord because the nature is also an energy of the Lord; and Krishna Himself in Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam gives various meditations to make such a connection:

«O son of Kuntī, I am the taste of water, the light of the sun and the moon, the syllable om̐ in the Vedic mantras; I am the sound in ether and ability in man. I am the original fragrance of the earth, and I am the heat in fire. I am the life of all that lives, and I am the penances of all ascetics. O son of Pṛthā, know that I am the original seed of all existences, the intelligence of the intelligent, and the prowess of all powerful men.» (Bhagavad-gita, 7.8-10).

To be in the wilderness does not contradict the Scriptures. But it is not possible to transform vikarma into devotional service because its definition contradicts the Scriptures, which are the Lord's desires imprinted in words. That is, vikarma is an action that contradicts the Lord's desire by its nature. Ideally, for Krishna's sake, one should simply renounce such activities:

«Some tapasya is certainly required. Without it, one can not advance in spiritual life or knowledge. If we simply engage in the animal propensities of eating, sleeping, mating and defending, not accepting the tapasya process, human life is a failure. If one wants to become an initiated member of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness society, we first of all ask him to undergo tapasya. In the Western countries especially it is a great tapasya to give up illicit sex life, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling» (Śrīla Prabhupāda's Lecture Compilation Book «Krishna Consciousness - Matchless Gifts»).

If we cannot stop doing it, then our attempt to minimize it for Krishna's sake also becomes a process of devotional service, even though we may occasionally fall into such sinful activities. If we do not have enough strength to renounce it, then we should increase the emphasis on other forms of devotional service (especially sraavanam-kirtanam) and connect it with Krishna consciousness by

adding devotional service in the form of remembrance of the Lord, as Śrīla Prabhupāda explained in the example with wine. Then in time we will gain strength to renounce it.

Our already existing talents, resources, and our body, which is bound to act, are other aspects of karma. Because of a proper understanding of renunciation (yukta-vairagya) in Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition all activities engaged in the mission of ISKCON become devotional service as well. Never before the mission of a spiritual movement has been mentioned, only one's own spiritual development has been spoken about. However, to assist in the mission of ISKCON is a fundamentally important anga of devotional service:



«Similarly, a devoted disciple of the spiritual master would rather die with the spiritual master than fail to execute the spiritual master's mission. As the Supreme Personality of Godhead comes down upon this earth to reestablish the principles of religion, so His representative, the spiritual master, also comes to reestablish religious principles. It is the duty of the disciples to take charge of the mission of the spiritual master and execute it properly. Otherwise the disciple should decide to die along with the spiritual master. In other words, to execute the will of the spiritual master, the disciple should be prepared to lay down his life and abandon all personal considerations.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.28.50).

Our movement has an infinitely deep and broad mission and one can engage one's body to serve it, be it physical labour, talents, resources, etc. Thus, a devotee has an exceptionally wide range of possible activities to occupy their nature in devotional service and help to promote the mission itself:

«Similarly, we can offer many services with our bodily activities. But all such activities must be in relationship with Kṛṣṇa. This relationship is established by connecting oneself with the bona fide spiritual master, who is the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa in disciplic succession. Therefore, the execution of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities with the body should be directed by the spiritual master and then performed with faith» (The Nectar of Devotion, introduction).

So, all your tendencies for this or that karmic activity and other opportunities can also relate to Krishna by engaging them in the mission. One may paint for Krishna, study the world for Krishna, build for Krishna, etc.

«Here in this material world, everyone is trying to enjoy life independently. Now we are simply teaching “No, that is not possible.” If you want to enjoy independently, then you become subjected to the laws of material nature. But if you want to enjoy along with Krishna, then you

are free. Just like in this temple, what is this difference between these temple activities and other activities? Here the center is Krishna; we are working for Krishna. We are eating for Krishna, we are working for Krishna, we are talking for Krishna. You are also talking, you are also walking, you are also working. The same thing going on. But the difference is, here everyone is working for Krishna. That is the difference» (Lecture, 12 February 1973).

Likewise, if we need any material skills to succeed in a mission, such as driving, cooking, management skills, etc., then education in these material disciplines also becomes spiritual:

«5) To prove by active work and preaching that Lord Sri Krishna is the only enjoyer of all the outcomes of individual and collective sacrifice, penance, meditation, arts, culture, science, because He is the Supreme Proprietor of the whole universe, eternally apart of Him everyone knows Him as a friend. Real peace can be attained when this is realized, in fact» (From Śrīla Prabhupāda's Constitution of association).

«In the Nārada Paścaraṭra the regulative principles of devotional service are described as follows: “Any activities sanctioned in the revealed Scriptures and aiming at the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are accepted by saintly teachers as the regulative principles of devotional service.» (The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 2).

So, we have discussed two types of karma. Among all person's activities in this world only various duties of social interaction and financial maintenance of oneself and one's family are left undiscussed. They also belong to the category of karma, and accordingly, they can be properly engaged in devotional service as well.

Karma-yoga and Karma-yoga in Krishna Consciousness



In Bhagavad-gita, there are two chapters on karma-yoga, and one is titled “Karma-yoga”, and the other is titled “Karma-yoga: activities in Krishna consciousness”. In fact, if we look at Śrīla Prabhupāda's use of this term, we can see that he used it in two different meanings:

«After performing sacrifices, sometimes a person engaged in fruitive activity customarily offers the results to Viṣṇu. But here it is said, bhagavaty addhā: one must directly offer everything to Viṣṇu. This is called sannyāsa (not merely nyāsa). A tridaṇḍi-sannyāsī carries three daṇḍas, signifying kaya-mano-vākya — body, mind and words. All of these should be offered to Viṣṇu, and then one can begin devotional service. Fruitive workers first perform some pious activities and then formally or officially offer the results to Viṣṇu. The real devotee, however, first offers his surrender to Kṛṣṇa with his body, mind and words and then uses his body, mind and words for the service

of Kṛṣṇa as Kṛṣṇa desires. <...> One's sincere endeavor to perform these nine processes of devotional service is technically called bhakti. The word addhā means "directly." One should not be like the karmīs, who perform pious activities and then formally offer the results to Kṛṣṇa. That is karma-kāṇḍa. One should not aspire for the results of his pious activities, but should dedicate oneself fully and then act piously. In other words, one should act for the satisfaction of Lord Viṣṇu, not for the satisfaction of his own senses. That is the meaning of the word addhā, "directly."» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 7.5.23-24).

«The life and dedication of Mahārāja Pṛthu in the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead serve as a good example of karma-yoga. The term karma-yoga is often used in Bhagavad-gītā, and herein Mahārāja Pṛthu is giving a practical example of what karma-yoga actually is. The first requirement for the proper execution of karma-yoga is given herein. Phalaṁ brahmaṇi sannyasya (or vinyasya): one must give the fruits of his activities to the Supreme Brahmana, Parabrahmana, Kṛṣṇa. By doing so, one actually situates himself in the renounced order of life, sannyāsa. As stated in Bhagavad-gītā (18.2), giving up the fruits of one's activities to the Supreme Personality of Godhead is called sannyāsa. <...> To give up the results of all activities is called renunciation [tyāga] by the wise. And that state is called the renounced order of life [sannyāsa] by great learned men.» Although he was living as a householder, Pṛthu Mahārāja was actually in the renounced order of life, sannyāsa. This will be clearer in the following verses. The word nirviṣaṅgaḥ, "uncontaminated," is very significant because Mahārāja Pṛthu was not attached to the results of his activities. In this material world a person is always thinking of the proprietorship of everything he accumulates or works for. When the fruits of one's activities are rendered to the service of the Lord, one is actually practicing karma-yoga. Anyone can practice karma-yoga, but it is especially easy for the householder, who can install the Deity of the Lord in the home and worship Him according to the methods of bhakti-yoga. <...> These methods of karma-yoga and bhakti-yoga are being broadcast all over the world by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Anyone can learn these methods simply by following the examples of the members of the Society. In one's home or in a temple, the Deity is considered the proprietor of everything, and everyone is considered the Deity's eternal servant. The Lord is transcendental, for He is not part of this material creation.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.22.51).

We can see two different approaches here. One is far inferior to the other in effectiveness, although it also helps one to progress spiritually. So, the first way is to consider ourselves enjoying the fruits of our labour while offering them to the Lord. The second is to work and regard the Lord as the one who enjoys the fruits of our labour, that is to engage them in service.

If a person who follows the second path has already devoted oneself entirely to the service to the Lord, the food in the guna of goodness that one takes belongs to Krishna - it has been prepared for Him and offered to Him, and is now taken by a devotee for His sake, because it will help in His service. Herewith we remember that food in the guna of goodness is described in Bhagavad-gita, 17.8 as follows: "Foods dear to those in the mode of goodness increase the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, fatty,

wholesome, and pleasing to the heart." Therefore, it pleases the senses of a devotee; it is not food in the guna of ignorance, characterised as tasteless ("Bhagavad-gītā," 17.10). That is, the senses of a devotee are satisfied, but one does not do it for the sake of the senses but to please the Lord. Whereas if we take the first path, we do everything for ourselves and only formally offer it to the Lord.

Both processes connect an object with the Lord. The second way, however, is considered preferable but requires more qualifications. Varnashrama-dharma is the best social environment to perform it. But it is important to understand that the mere performance of one's prescribed varnashrama-dharma duties is not devotional service to the Lord as such.

«One who has forsaken his material occupations to engage in the devotional service of the Lord may sometimes fall down while in an immature stage, yet there is no danger of his being unsuccessful. On the other hand, a nondevotee, though fully engaged in occupational duties, does not gain anything.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.5.17).

«Some scholars argue that simply by following the principles of varṇa and āśrama one can gradually rise to the perfections reached by practicing devotional service, but this argument is not accepted by the great authorities. Lord Caitanya also condemned this idea while He was talking with Rāmānanda Rāya about the gradual development of devotional service. He rejected the idea of the importance of varṇāśrama-dharma when it was put forward by Rāmānanda Rāya. He said that this advancement of varṇa and āśrama is merely external. There is a higher principle. In Bhagavad-gītā also the Lord says that one has to give up all other principles of elevation and take simply to the method of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That will help one in achieving the highest perfection of life.» (The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 13).

To perform one's prescribed duties connected in consciousness with the service to the Supreme Lord is an aspect of devotional service. The only difference is whether we realize this connection in our consciousness or not. If we do, it is devotional service; otherwise, it is material performance of the prescribed duties.

«If one works according to the varṇāśrama-dharma system and does not desire fruitive results, he gets satisfaction gradually. Discharging one's occupational duty as a means of rendering devotional service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the ultimate goal of life. Bhagavad-gītā confirms this as the process of karma-yoga. In other words, we should act only for the satisfaction and service of the Lord; otherwise we will be entangled by the resultant actions» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.20.9).

It may sound confusing, but in fact it is simple, just when a devotee drinks water, for example. If in his mind this activity is connected with the Lord, it is a devotional service; if it is not, it is not a devotional service. Similarly, if a person simply performs one's duties, it is a material activity in the guna of goodness; but if one performs one's duties and connects that activity with the Lord in one's mind, it is a devotional service. However, it is important to consider a possible self-deception. A

person may think one does something for the Lord, but one actually does it for themselves. The objective criterion to determine whether one performs self-deception or acts sincerely is how one directs the fruits of this activity; whether they are used for sensual pleasures or for the service to the Lord.

In this case, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that it is not necessary to act within the social structure of classical varnāshrama-dharma. One does not even need to change one's external position; one simply needs to engage the fruits of one's activities to please the Lord and do it under the guidance of a master.

«There is a similar statement by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself to Uddhava, in the Eleventh Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, twenty-seventh chapter, verse 49. The Lord says there, “My dear Uddhava, all persons are engaged in activities, whether those indicated in the revealed Scriptures or ordinary worldly activities. If by the result of either of such activities they worship Me in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then automatically they become very happy within this world as well as in the next. Of this there is no doubt.” We can conclude from this statement by Kṛṣṇa that activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness will give everyone all perfection in all desires.

Thus the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is so nice that there is no need of even designating oneself brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, brahmacārī, grhastha, vānaprastha or sannyāsī. Let everyone be engaged in whatever occupation he now has. Simply let him worship Lord Kṛṣṇa by the result of his activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That will adjust the whole situation, and everyone will be happy and peaceful within this world. In the Nārada Paścaraṅtra the regulative principles of devotional service are described as follows: “Any activities sanctioned in the revealed Scriptures and aiming at the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are accepted by saintly teachers as the regulative principles of devotional service. If one regularly executes such service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master, then gradually he rises to the platform of serving in pure love of God.”» (The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 2).

The most evident way to devote the fruits to Krishna in this way is through the donation of finances that come as a result of our social duties. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions about financial sacrifice are usually not very popular in the devotees' society nowadays, he cited them often enough talking about sacrificing the fruits of one's labour in the process of karma-yoga. The difference between karma yoga and karma yoga in Krishna consciousness is the following: in karma yoga a devotee considers finances as their own fruit of performing prescribed duties, and sacrifices some of this fruit to the service to Krishna so that He too may be pleased; but in karma-yoga in Krishna consciousness a devotee has already engaged all their activities during the day (and life) in the service to Him and, therefore, finances as a result of performing prescribed duties already belong to Krishna. And a devotee can allocate them to different types of service.

«Apart from such Vedic duties, even in our ordinary dealings (for example, in our household affairs or in our business or profession) we must consider that the result of all activities must

be given over to the supreme enjoyer, Lord Kṛṣṇa. ... The major portion of our monetary income, not less than fifty percent, must be spent to carry out the order of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Not only should we give the profit of our earning to this cause, but we must also arrange to preach this cult of devotion to others because that is also one of the orders of the Lord. (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.5.36).

«The citizens of the state must give in charity up to fifty percent of their income for the purpose of creating a spiritual atmosphere in the state or in human society, both individually and collectively. They should preach the principles of Bhāgavatam by (a) karma-yoga, or doing everything for the satisfaction of the Lord, (b) regular hearing of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from authorized persons or realized souls, (c) chanting of the glories of the Lord congregationally at home or at places of worship, (d) rendering all kinds of service to bhāgavatas engaged in preaching Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and (e) residing in a place where the atmosphere is saturated with God consciousness. If the state is regulated by the above process, naturally there will be God consciousness everywhere.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.17.38).

In conclusion, it is also worth mentioning an aspect of relationships with other living beings. Changing one's worldview may radically transform them. For example, one may view one's spouse not as one's spouse but as an associate in devotional service, or even as a beloved of the Lord who is meant to serve Him and is entrusted into our care to help her/him in that service. And to see children not as our own children but, again, as living beings, who did not accidentally take birth in our family, but see them as "children of Krishna" and to make efforts to take care of raising them in the right way.

«A child is a rare gift given by Krishna, but at the same time a great responsibility; every parent has the responsibility to see that his child grows up K.C» (SPL to Hamsaduta, 15 August, 1967).

«All of us are children of Kṛṣṇa, God, and since we are unhappy because of taking material bodies for repeated birth, death, old age, and disease, He is more unhappy than we are.» (The Teachings of Queen Kunti, part 13).

A concept such as "childhood" exists in the material world only because it exists in the spiritual world. Mother Yashoda behaves in a certain way with Krishna during His childhood, and the parents of the other cowherd boys behave in the same way with all other children. They behave in a way that pleases Krishna. It means that even in the material world we can behave towards a child in a way that pleases Krishna. If we have the right mentality, our service becomes essentially non-different from that of the residents of the spiritual world in the same aspect. So amazing is the power of devotional service that simply to change a baby's nappies can make a perfect life in this world!

Certainly, relationships can have different shades, but all forms of appropriate vision, as the one described above, alone transform our relationships with other living beings into devotional service, if activities are performed in a pure and uncorrupted manner. In the same way, depending

on one's role in the relationship it is important to manifest an appropriate attitude toward other living beings as well.

So, we have examined how it is possible to always meditate on the Lord through sraavanam-kirtanam-smaranam. We have also observed an extremely wide range of different forms of devotional service through the sixty-four angas of devotional service. We have talked about how our body, daily social and domestic duties, attachments, and struggles can be connected with the Lord through the principle of yukta-vairagya. And finally, we have discussed a possibility of spiritualizing relationships with other living beings. Thus, we have described the full range of possible human activities and the ways to keep a person engaged in devotional service. Sometimes devotees subconsciously reject a part of their duties related to a material body, believing that it distracts them from devotional service and, therefore, remain in a constant state of inner strain. But through the science of bhakti one can spiritualize various aspects of one's life and live in harmony with the laws of the universe.

A proper education must create a system in which every devotee can function successfully by being constantly engaged in the process of transformation of one's heart. First, such education implies an inner change of consciousness, just as Arjuna did not change externally in any way when he had received knowledge from Bhagavad-gītā. He remained a family man, a kshatriya, a warrior; he did not even change his plan for the upcoming battle, externally everything remained the same. Only his consciousness changed. Of course, given that there was no vikarma in Arjuna's actions from the very beginning as he acted according to the Scriptures.

From the Beginning of Life

Another aspect of the continuity of education is that a devotee always learns; not only in adulthood but one is involved in the educational process, in the process of conception from the very beginning.



«The friends of the twice-born families are those who are born in the families of brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas, or the spiritually cultured families, but who themselves are not equal to their forefathers. Such descendants are not recognized as such, for want of purificatory achievements. The purificatory activities begin even before the birth of a child, and the seed-giving reformatory process is called garbhādhāna-saṁskāra. One who has not undergone such garbhādhāna-saṁskāra, or spiritual family planning, is not accepted as being of an actual twice-born family. The garbhādhāna-saṁskāra is followed by other purificatory processes, out of which the sacred thread ceremony is one. This is performed at the time of spiritual initiation. After this particular saṁskāra, one is rightly called twice-born. One birth is calculated during the seed-giving saṁskāra, and the second birth is calculated at the time of spiritual initiation. One who has been able to undergo such important saṁskāras can be called a bona fide twice-born. If the father and the mother do not undertake the process of spiritual family planning and simply beget children out of passion only, their children are called dvija-bandhus. These dvija-

bandhus are certainly not as intelligent as the children of the regular twice-born families. The dvija-bandhus are classified with the śūdras and the woman class, who are by nature less intelligent. The śūdras and the woman class do not have to undergo any saṁskāra save and except the ceremony of marriage. The less intelligent classes of men, namely women, śūdras and unqualified sons of the higher castes, are devoid of necessary qualifications to understand the purpose of the transcendental Vedas. For them the Mahābhārata was prepared». (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.4.25).

Because of the peculiarities of a body during this period of time a process of transformation looks somewhat different, but nevertheless it must take place. Since continuity is a principle of nature itself, a person learns something from the first days of their existence. But if the process is not set up correctly, one is naturally taught only by the immersion of consciousness into matter.

«Therefore our young men must be trained at the earliest age to not be attached to so many things like the home, family, friendship, society and nation. To train the innocent boy to be a sense gratifier at the early age when the child is actually happy in any circumstance is the greatest violence. Therefore: brahmacari guru-kule vasan danto guror hitam. The brahmacari lives at the place of the spiritual master by begging for his maintenance, by cleaning, learning the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and engaging in the process of Bhagavata-dharma, whereby his life will have a firm, sane foundation with which he can overcome the forces of maya by strong training in the beginning.» (SPL to Jayatirtha, 20th January, 1976).

A proper process of educating and training children is a topic for a separate study, as there are many aspects to be considered. For example, sometimes parents, inspired by the importance of children's education, may become violent in their attempts to educate them, which usually results in disappointed adolescents in Krishna consciousness. Other mistakes are also possible, but we will not describe them in this book.

It is important for us, at the very least, to mention children's education as a valuable part of the principle, and that as a society we must not neglect it. A child can receive spiritual education while still in the womb in addition to traditional transformative purification processes (samskar) specifically created in the varnashrama culture for such transformation of children who are not ready for traditional forms of education:

«When he was in the womb of his mother, Prahlāda Mahārāja listened to the words of Nārada Muni. One cannot imagine how the baby in embryo could hear Nārada, but this is spiritual life; progress in spiritual life cannot be obstructed by any material condition. This is called ahaituky apratihātā. Reception of spiritual knowledge is never checked by any material condition. Thus Prahlāda Mahārāja, from his very childhood, spoke spiritual knowledge to his class friends, and certainly it was effective, although all of them were children.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 7.7.1).

This process then continues into childhood especially after the age of five, the age when a child undertakes gurukula according to the Vedic system. Until that time a child is brought up

primarily by living example of its parents and by various purification processes, including hearing Srimad Bhagavatam, even if it is not yet mentally capable to understand what it hears. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself gave an example of his upbringing that became a foundation of his spiritual life.

«So if these children are being taught from the very beginning of their life... We had the opportunity of being trained up by our parents like this. So some way or other, they have come to... [break] Many saintly persons used to visit my father's house. My father was Vaiṣṇava. He was Vaiṣṇava, and he wanted me to become a Vaiṣṇava. Whenever some saintly person would come, he would ask him, "Please bless my son that he can become a servant of Rādhārāṇī." That was his prayer. He never prayed for anything. And he gave me education how to play mṛdaṅga. My mother was against. There was two teachers-one for teaching me A-B-C-D, and one for teaching me mṛdaṅga. So the one teacher was waiting and the other teacher was teaching me how to play on mṛdaṅga. So my mother would be angry that "What is this nonsense? You are teaching mṛdaṅga? What he will do with this mṛdaṅga?" [chuckles] But perhaps my father wanted that I should be a great mṛdaṅga player in the future. [laughter] Therefore I am very much indebted to my father, and I have dedicated my book, Kṛṣṇa book, to him. He wanted this. He wanted me to be preacher of Bhāgavata, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and player of mṛdaṅga and to become servant of Rādhārāṇī. So every parent should think like that; otherwise one should not become father and mother. That is the injunction in the śāstra.» (Lecture, 3 March 1975).

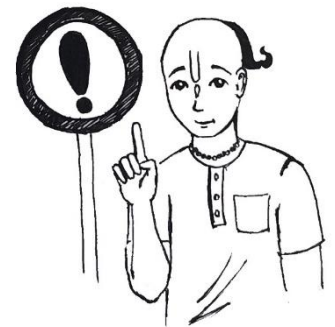
At his last Vyasa-puja he even said that his father had taught him everything in the spiritual life; his spiritual master had taught him everything except printing and distributing spiritual literature.

So, we can see another important aspect of the educational system in our society: it should include working with devotees at any age and even before they are born.

Common Mistakes in the Principle of Continuity of Education

Let us summarize by listing the most common mistakes that can be made in ISKCON under this principle:

1. not to consider acceptance of genuine guidance from a spiritual master as a vital aspect of spiritual practice that enables to establish all other practices of devotional service correctly. The most common mistake is to accept an initiating spiritual master without receiving proper guidance in daily life from him or from local devotees.
2. lack of emphasis on hearing, when other practices of devotional service distract from hearing in one way or another. It may be in a broader sense when other forms of activity prevail in a devotee's life, such as service in the mission field, which detract from the foundation of the spiritual life in the form of sraṇam. It is also possible in a narrow sense, when not enough time given to the lecture format and it is inappropriately replaced by interactive teaching, as discussed in the previous principle.



3. to take care of a minor part of a devotee's life when education proves to be too narrow and does not address one part or another. In particular:

- when education does not include remembrance based on the Scripture as it has been discussed in the principle of practicality, and does not encourage a person to become constantly involved in the processes of sravanam-kirtanam in their lives;
- when education is not meant to include a wide range of the sixty-four angas of devotional service, but is limited to hearing only. Or when a devotee may engage in the various angas of devotional service, but they are not a part of any general educational system that has a general vision and coherence. Read more about it in the principle of systematicity;
- a contradictory concept to the Scriptures that devotional service only takes place in a temple or other ISKCON institution but not in everyday spiritual life, where every second can be involved in the process of devotional service;
- insufficient involvement of a devotee in the mission of the movement according to their qualifications, even though their service is a part of their educational practice;
- inability to see other living beings through the prism of spiritual vision and therefore interact with them on a material platform;
- concern for spiritual well-being of adults, who have been converted to Krishna consciousness but not for those, who are raised or are just born into families of devotees;

4. Misunderstanding of the principle of yukta-vairagya and deviations from it as the result:

- an opinion that through yukta-vairagya one's desire for the sense gratification, especially through sinful activities, becomes something that does not need purification in due course. In such cases, devotees have two purposes in life - to serve Krishna and to gratify their own senses. In fact, the principle of yukta-vairagya implies that the sense gratification is a possible desire which is purified by itself if one associates with Krishna but it is by no means a goal of life. The purpose of life is to serve the Lord;
- a lack of distinction between two approaches of karma yoga: when we want to gratify our senses and therefore formally offer fruits to the Lord; and when we want to serve the Lord, and yet our senses are naturally gratified. And, accordingly, a lack of prioritization of these two approaches;

- loss of emphasis on the foundation, the direct angas of devotional service, without which anything else cannot be spiritualized. As a result, devotional service becomes a material activity, or an activity for the sake of sense gratification but offered to the Lord;
- to reject what could be engaged in the service to the Lord considering renunciation to be more important than bhakti. For example, beautiful (but pious, not generating the guna of passion) clothes to wear for Krishna's enjoyment may be mistakenly replaced by unattractive clothes in the guna of ignorance;
- an attempt to establish a unified standard of renunciation for all devotees in a community, a region, or ISKCON by labelling those who are on one side of that standard as "fanatics" and those who are on the other side as "enjoyers". For example, if a devotee had lived for the same amount of money in three countries with different standard of living, in one country they would be considered a "poor ascetic," in another as an average citizen, and in a third as a "wealthy enjoyer". But it is the same person with the same level of conditioning to material pleasures. Only the environment around them changes. Therefore, to regulate the principle of yukta-vairagya it is necessary to be guided by the individual nature of a person but not social norms;
- refusal to acquire necessary material skills and knowledge for the service under the pretext that they are materialistic. We will discuss where these skills may or may not come from and how it should be done in another principle, the principle of authority. However, it is important to point out that material skills do not come on their own in the process of bhakti-yoga. For example, a person who has reached a high level in devotional service does not become a professional airplane pilot, and therefore needs to be trained in this activity if necessary (for the service). That too will be both, education and devotional service.



Principle of Authority

Principle of authority

As we discussed earlier, spiritual knowledge is the only genuine education and it is possible to obtain it only from an authoritative source:

«An authoritative source is the only means of knowing about transcendental subject matter definitely. There is no alternative» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.10.21, literal translation).

The Lord is a Personality, which means that He has desires. And devotees' lifestyle in His closest entourage reflects those desires. In the spiritual world every single inhabitant aspires to serve the Lord according to His desires. The Scriptures give us various indications, which are really projections of the way of life of the Lord's eternal companions onto our reality. The authority of the Scriptures lies in the fact that they reveal to us the Lord's desires, which we cannot understand in any other way due to our conditioned nature.

«Therefore if we at all want our activities to be auspicious, then we should work under the directions of the Supreme Lord. Such directions are given in authoritative Scriptures such as Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita, or from a bona fide spiritual master» (Bhagavad-gita, 10.3).

«Vedic evidence is called sabda-brahma. There are many things which are beyond the perception of our imperfect senses, yet the authoritative evidence of sound vibration is perfect. The Vedas are known as sabda-brahma because evidence taken from the Vedas constitutes the ultimate understanding. This is because sabda-brahma, or the Vedas, represents the Supreme Personality of Godhead.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 4.24.40).

Indeed, the principle of authority is not present in spiritual education only; it is also a general principle of our world. We can only obtain all real knowledge of this world from an authoritative source, including the knowledge of the material world.

«Science begins on some definite data, just like Sir Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravitation, and so much scientific advancement depends on such authoritative statements. So

even scientific knowledge has to stand on the evidence of authority» (SPL to Sri Govinda, 10 February 1969).

And, of course, God is the ultimate source of all knowledge:

«If there is any wisdom and education within this material world, the cause of such wisdom and education is Krishna.» («Srimad-Bhagavatam, 10.2.26).

There are ten kinds of pramanas (pratyaksha, anumana, upamana, sabda, arthapatti, abhava, sambhava, arsha, atikhya and cheshta), but Śrīla Prabhupada following Jiva Goswami, reduced them to three main ones: pratyaksha, or knowledge derived from direct observation through the senses; anumana, or knowledge derived through logical reasoning; and sabda, or knowledge derived through hearing from a person who possesses knowledge. The word "pramana" itself means proof, evidence, or confirmation. It is important to understand that not only sabda is pramana, but pratyaksha and anumana are also pramanas, that is evidence. And any pramana is as authoritative as the true knowledge it gives. If our senses give true knowledge, then we get it from an authoritative source - the senses. The problem with this source is that the senses of a conditioned living being are not always authoritative. Therefore, although all true knowledge comes from an authoritative source, the best way to acquire knowledge is through the sabda because it has no inherent defects. The following is Śrīla Prabhupāda's lengthy description that compares these kinds of pramanas and proves the superiority of sabda:

«Now Lord Krishna, after describing about the mahatmas, or the great souls, who worship the Supreme Lord by this process of kirtana... Satatam kirtayanto mam [Bg. 9.14]. Sravanam kirtanam [SB 7.5.23]. The process of devotion is nine different types. Sravanam. Sravanam means hearing. Kirtanam. Kirtanam means chanting. Kirtanam actually means describing. You can describe with music. You can describe with words. You can describe in speeches. Any sort of describing, that is called kirtana. And sravanam. Unless you hear, you cannot describe. What you shall describe? If you do not know anything about the Supreme Lord, then how can you describe? Therefore hearing is the first item, sravanam. And the whole Vedic literature is called hearing, sruti, sruti-sastra. Sruti means to receive hearing. If you want to know the Supreme, you do not require to qualify yourself materially. You can remain what you are, but if you simply hear... God has given you the power of hearing. If you hear from authoritative sources, then you become perfect, simply by hearing. Therefore the first principle, hearing, is recommended, sravanam. And formerly, the Vedas were heard by the students from the spiritual master. Just like in the Bhagavad-gita you'll find that Arjuna is hearing from Krishna. He's not studying any Vedanta philosophy in the battlefield. He was simply hearing. So that is the process, hearing. You can hear at any place. Even in the warfield, you can hear from the authoritative source. So that was the process of acquiring knowledge, hearing. Hearing means receiving the knowledge, not manufacturing. There are two process of knowledge. There are some persons who think, "Oh, why shall I hear from him? Oh, I can think. I can speculate. I can manufacture something new of my own group." These are nonsense. This is not Vedic process. Vedic process is hearing, ascending process, er, not..., descending process. There are

two processes of knowledge: ascending and descending. Ascending means trying to go high by your strength, and descending means the pure knowledge which comes from up, you receive it. Inductive and deductive process. So ascending process is not recommended in the Vedic process of knowledge. Vedic way of receiving knowledge—by aural reception, by submissive aural reception from the spiritual master to the student. This is the way. It is coming. As we have read in the Fourth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita, *evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh* [Bg. 4.2]: "In this way, traditionally, from the spiritual master to the student, this knowledge was imparted." The Lord said that "I imparted this knowledge first of all to the sun-god, and the sun-god imparted this knowledge to his son, Manu, and Manu imparted this knowledge to his son, Iksvaku." Iksvaku was the king of this planet. So from Iksvaku, this knowledge is coming down from the master, or from the father to the son, or from the master to the disciple. It is coming on. And because that disciplic succession was broken, therefore Lord Krishna said that "I am speaking again that old system of knowledge to you, Arjuna, because you are My devotee, you are My dear friend." We have already studied this fact. So this is the way. Therefore *sravanam*. *Sravanam* is the... *Sravanam* means hearing. Hearing is the first stage. And hearing is so powerful that simply by hearing from authoritative source, you can become completely perfect, simply by hearing. Submissive hearing, of course. Submissive. *Jṣāne prayāsam udapasya namanta eva*. This is a verse from Bhagavata, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. *Jṣāne prayāsam udapasya namanta eva*. Don't be upstart. Don't try to understand the supreme knowledge, the Absolute Truth, by your strength. You are very poor. Your senses are imperfect. You cannot understand. This, this process, you should give up. *Jṣāne prayāsam*. Attempt to know the Supreme by ascending process. "Oh, I shall know. I'll manufacture my own way." This is the way going on nowadays. Everyone is thinking that "Why shall I accept any authority? I shall think myself what I am and what is my duty." This is going on. But this is not the Vedic process. The Vedic process is to *sravanam*. So simply if we give up this foolish process of understanding the Absolute Truth by my own attempt, we, if we give up and we become submissive... Yes. Submissive means we must know our imperfectness. Our imperfectness I have several times described in this meeting. So long we are conditioned, there are four kinds of imperfectness, that we must commit mistake. So long we are conditioned, nobody can say that "I'll not commit mistake. I never commit any mistakes." It is not possible. You must have. To err is human. So this is one imperfectness. And to become illusioned. To accept one thing which is not. Illusion means to accept something for something. Just like we accept this body. We identify with this body, every one of us. If we ask you what you are, "Oh, I am American." What is your American? This body is American. But it is not... You are not this body. So this is illusion. So conditioned soul is to commit mistake, to be illusioned, and the senses are imperfect. We are very much proud of seeing, but as soon as the light is put off, we cannot see. So our seeing is conditional. And similarly, all senses are conditional. So therefore imperfect. And there is another thing which is very nice. We have got a cheating propensity. I do not know anything, but I want to cheat others that I know everything. I don't... I am a fool number one, but I want to start a group of students and teach him foolish things. This is cheating. One must know from the authoritative sources and preach that thing. Just like Arjuna was taught by Krishna, and that philosophy is going on. And those who are accepting the principle of Arjuna, they're real student of Bhagavad-gita.» (Lecture, 1 December 1966).

As far as material knowledge, it is best to obtain it from an authoritative source as it saves us time. For example, Western medicine began to develop about a thousand years before our era, and it was not until 1693 that Levenhuc discovered the existence of bacteria. It means that it took 2700 years for the whole world simply to learn of their existence and to act in accordance with that knowledge. Before that discovery, the inhabitants of European countries practically did not wash themselves on the pretext that bathing relaxed the body and therefore contradicted the asceticism promoted by the Christian religion of that time. Consequently, the plague repeatedly decimated entire European cities and countries, while neighbouring regions were much less affected by it. How much strength and how many lives could have been saved if a simple thing such as the necessity to wash one's hands and body had simply been accepted from the authoritative Scriptures. Nevertheless, over nearly three millennia people managed to come to the right conclusions through observation and logic. Even though it did not happen without sabda because each generation passed on the accumulated baggage of knowledge to the other.

As far as spiritual knowledge is concerned, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the following analogy to prove the necessity of sabda:

«Therefore, things which are beyond your perception, you have to accept it by hearing from the authoritative source. Just like another example: If you want to see who is your actual father, that is not possible to make an experiment who is your father. There may be some experimental. But if you ask your mother, authority, "Mother, who is my father?" the mother says, "This is the man who is your father," you have to accept, that's all. You cannot make any experiment, neither it is possible to understand who is your father by experimental knowledge. Then how you can make experiment the Supreme Father, God? That is not possible. Simply you have to hear from the authoritative sources. But you can make some experiment. But that is not very important thing. The important thing is to hear from the authorized person. That is important» (Lecture, 12 October 1972).

Thus, the principle of authority is always valid, and knowledge is as authoritative as its source. The best way to acquire knowledge is through sabda or hearing from the person who has the knowledge.

Process of Transmitting Sabda-pramana



There can be only one perfect source of the Scriptures, therefore, the Lord is the source of the original Scriptures .

«The Vedas are said to be the breath of the Lord, and that breath was inhaled by Brahmā, the original student of the Vedas» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.13.26).

«And sastra means the statement of authorities. That is sastra. Just like Bhagavad-gita: it is sastra because it is spoken by the supreme guru, Krishna.» (Lecture, 22 January 1972).

When knowledge comes into this world, there is a need for an instrument to maintain it. So, the principle of authority is an extremely complex principle because it comes down to maintaining the presence of spiritual knowledge in the material world. All religions of this world always aim to maintain the original divinity of their knowledge (even if it was not actually the case), especially the Vedic tradition, which purpose is to maintain the manifestation of the Lord's desire in the material world throughout its existence. This principle even requires periodic direct intervention of Krishna, and, as we know from Bhagavad-gītā (4.7-8), if knowledge is lost, He comes again into this world to re-establish it.

Parampara is another key instrument (apart from the Lord's direct intervention) to maintain authoritative spiritual knowledge.

«If anyone wants to derive transcendental pleasure by hearing the pastimes of the Lord, he must hear from the authoritative source, as explained here. Maitreya heard the narration from his bona fide spiritual master, and Vidura also heard from Maitreya. One becomes an authority simply by presenting whatever he has heard from his spiritual master, and one who does not accept a bona fide spiritual master cannot be an authority. » (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 3.19.33).

«All Vedic knowledge is based on the principle that one must approach a bona fide spiritual master and hear from him the authoritative statements of the Vedas. It is not necessary for one to be a highly polished literary man to receive knowledge; to receive perfect knowledge from a perfect person, one must be expert in hearing. This is called the descending process of deductive knowledge, or avaroha-pantha» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi lila 16.52).

Moreover, it is the essence of parampara, that is it has no other purpose than to pass on the torch of this spiritual knowledge and to make contact with the Lord available:

«I am simply serving my spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Mahārāja and all the ācāryas in the disciplic succession. If I have done anything of credit it is that I have not changed their teachings. I have not added anything of my own interpretation. (SPL to Bhīma (and others), Bombay, 16 May 1974).»

«This means that one has to understand Kṛṣṇa not directly but through the medium of the spiritual master. The spiritual master is the transparent medium, although it is true that the experience is still direct. This is the mystery of the disciplic succession» (Bhagavad-gita, 18.75).

One might ask: What is the need for a live transmission of knowledge? After all, as we know, the human factor can distort original knowledge. A great demonstration of that is the "broken telephone," which each of us experienced even in our daily lives. Why not consider only the original Scriptures as the only source of knowledge? After all, if their texts were not altered, should they still be as complete a source of knowledge for us as they were millions of years ago?

The whole point is that spiritual knowledge can only be fully absorbed from a living person, as we will discuss in the principle of accepting living guidance. And so, as we know, the Scriptures were not even written down before Vyasadeva, they only were transmitted orally from a teacher to a disciple. Then, why can knowledge be acquired only from a living person? Apart from other factors, which we will discuss later in the relevant section, a living person must explain the meaning of the original Scriptures through their personal spiritual experience:

«So Vedic literature requires explanation, authoritative explanation. So the original Vedas, they, it was not possible for understanding for ordinary class of men. ... So those who accept the spiritual master as father and the Vedic knowledge as mother, they are called dvija, twice-born.» (Lecture, 10 January, 1968).

«One who is not taught by a bona fide spiritual master cannot understand the Vedic literature. To emphasize this point, Lord Kṛṣṇa, while instructing Arjuna, clearly said that it was because Arjuna was His devotee and confidential friend that he could understand the mystery of the Bhagavad-gītā. It is to be concluded, therefore, that one who wants to understand the mystery of revealed Scriptures must approach a bona fide spiritual master, hear from him very submissively and render service to him. Then the import of the Scriptures will be revealed. It is stated in the Vedas (Śvetāśvatara Up. 6.23): “The real import of the Scriptures is revealed to one who has unflinching faith in both the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the spiritual master.”» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 7.48).

We hear the original Scriptures through the lens of other people's understanding. Moreover, what the acharyas of the past said has also become the Scriptures. As we know, the Scriptures are divided into sruti, which are the original Vedas, and smriti, which are works composed by sages. Here lies one of the fundamental differences between us and the impersonalists: the Mayawadis do not recognize smriti, but unlike them, we consider Vaishnava Acharya's explanations as sastra as well. And to emphasize it even more, in our tradition we pay more attention to smriti than to the original Scriptures. For example, Bhagavad-gita, Srimad Bhagavatam, Śrīla Prabhupāda's commentaries are all smriti.

«The Mayavadi scholars do not accept the Puranas, but Śrīla Madhvacarya and all other authorities accept them as the authoritative histories of the world» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 7.2.27).

«Prabhupada: Yes. Smṛti means... The Vedas are considered as, taken as sruti. But simply by hearing one cannot understand. Therefore smṛtis, they have explained. Purayati iti purāṇa. Complete. The Vedic mantra is not always understood. Just like the Vedānta mantra, janmādy asya yataḥ [SB 1.1.1]. This is very short cut. But Bhagavata explains, janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhiṣaḥ svarāt. Explanation. The smṛti is explanation. ... You cannot change the original sruti-smṛti, but you have to take the timely recommendation» (Answers to questions, June 28, 1976.)

Thus, impersonalists cannot gain true knowledge because they try to reject parampara and Śrīla Vyasadeva in particular, because he compiled Srimad Bhagavatam at his spiritual maturity, which they reject. It is important to avoid such an attempt to "jump over parampara" in our tradition because such a temptation can sometimes occur. For example, an attempt to interpret Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings by bypassing personal association with him and the GBC council, which is Śrīla Prabhupāda's highest governing body in ISKCON including the field of spiritual matters. Or even to reject the authority of this body, trying to demonstrate one's deeper understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's will but rejecting the basic principle that Śrīla Prabhupāda laid down in our society.

«So if you want to understand Bhagavad-gīta then we must understand in the same way as the person who directly heard from. This is called paramparā system. Suppose I have heard something from my spiritual master. So I speak to you the same thing. So this is paramparā system. You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called paramparā system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, I mean to say, neglecting the next ācārya, immediate next ācārya.» (Lecture, Los Angeles December 8, 1973).

«You have rightly observed that I am simply trying to execute the order of my spiritual master. Whatever is being done it is not on account of my intelligence or endeavor because I am simply an instrument in the hands of my spiritual master. I do not know how far I have got the capacity to carry His order, but I may say that I have a sincere desire to do it. This is paramparā system. If a student tries to satisfy his immediate ācārya or the spiritual master, that is the only qualification for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» (SPL to Paramānanda, Los Angeles, 17 June, 1970).

Or, on the other hand, an attempt to understand the previous acharyas outside Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's role is crucial to understanding how the principle of authority works in our society, we will not dwell on it here, since it has already been explained in excellent detail by H.M. Ravindra Swarupa Das in his book "Śrīla Prabhupāda, The Founding Acharya of ISKCON", which has been officially accepted by the GBC and is worth reading for every reader of this book.

Process of the Loss of Sabda-Pramana



That said, the explanation of the Scriptures can indeed be false, when the explanation changes the meaning of the Scriptures:

«In the paramparā 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 śāstras, and therefore they are considered to be apa-sampradāya, which means “outside of the sampradāya.” Some of these groups are known as āula, bāula, kartābhajā, neḍā, daraveśa, sāṇi, sahajiyā, sakhībhekī, smārta, jāta-gosāṣi, ativādī, cūḍādhārī and gaurāṅga-nāgarī. In order to follow strictly the disciplic succession of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one should not associate with these apasampradāya communities.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 7.48).

«TRANSLATION “The self-evident Vedic literatures are the highest evidence of all, but if these literatures are interpreted, their self-evident nature is lost. PURPORT We quote Vedic evidence to support our statements, but if we interpret it according to our own judgment, the authority of the Vedic literature is rendered imperfect or useless. In other words, by interpreting the Vedic version one minimizes the value of Vedic evidence.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 7.132).

There are various examples of it in history. For example, the most common one is: Bhagavad-gita was quoted and translated by many in the West before Śrīla Prabhupāda, but it never made a person who read those translations a devotee. In addition, history knows of cases where even the Scriptures like the Ramayana were counterfeited in a way that is, the books were written with a similar title but they were not authoritative.

«Of course in America there are so many editions of Bhagavad-gītā available in English, but as far as I have seen, not only in America but also in India, none of them can be strictly said to be authoritative because in almost every one of them the commentator has expressed his own opinions without touching the spirit of Bhagavad-gītā as it is» (Bhagavad-gita, Introduction).

«Therefore although there are many so-called Ramayanas, or histories of Lord Ramacandra's activities, some of them are not actually authoritative» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 9.10.3).

Thus, the Scriptures require interpretations that should explain the original meaning of the Scriptures, not change it. What causes such changes, be it either conscious, when one realizes that

the interpretation of the Scriptures been substituted, or unconscious, when one is not even aware of the substitution, that is one hasn't had such intention?

The reason is generally universal, though it has many variations. The essence is always the same, having a false motive a devotee is contaminated with material energy and, therefore, misled. And moreover, Krishna from one's heart in the form of Paramatma Himself helps them to sink in their delusion, if they desire so.

«Of course, we are delivering speeches from authoritative book, Bhagavad-gita. I am not speaking before you of my own imagination. I am speaking from the authorized book. Therefore it is not exactly pravacana, neither I am squeezing out some meaning for my purpose» (Lecture, 8 September, 1966.).

«That understanding which considers irreligion to be religion and religion to be irreligion, under the spell of illusion and darkness, and strives always in the wrong direction, O Pārtha, is in the mode of ignorance.» (Bhagavad-gita, 18.32).

«I am in everyone's heart as the Supersoul. As soon as one desires to worship some demigod, I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that particular deity.» (Bhagavad-gita, 7.21).

Another reason is when the words of the acharyas are addressed to a particular audience and therefore adapted to that audience to enlighten the audience. But these words are perceived out of context and are applied outside the context and outside the original purpose of the message. That is, instructions conditioned by time, place, and circumstance are elevated to the rank of absolute. As a historical example, Shankaracharya, who influenced the appearance of preaching Mayavada, is a case in point:

«Sripada Sankaracarya wanted to establish the predominance of one's spiritual identity; therefore he wanted to convert the atheists through an imaginary interpretation of the Vedic literatures. These are the secrets of the acaryas. Sometimes they conceal the real purport of the Vedas and explain the Vedas in a different way. Sometimes they enunciate a different theory just to bring the atheists under their control. Thus it is said that Sankara's philosophy is for pasandas» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila, 25.42).

Principle of Maintaining Sabda

Thus, there are certain mechanisms in all traditions that make it possible to maintain the primordial divinity of knowledge. The first principle of such maintenance is that no one has the right to change the books out of their own will; they remain as they are.



«Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. New smṛti? they may take it as "new smṛti," but smṛti is smṛti—it is not new. In any spiritual statement, you have to give references to śruti and smṛti. Otherwise, it is not valid. There must be veda-pramāṇa, śabda-pramāṇa: evidence from the Vedas and from the explanatory Vedic literature. Otherwise, there is no evidence. Your statement is not valid: you cannot change the original śruti-smṛti. But you have to take their particular recommendation for the particular time» (Civilization and Transcendence, Śrīla Prabhupāda's Lecture and Conversations Book, chapter 5).

One may object here, recalling the recent revision of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. However, those changes were made to bring back the original text, which was mistakenly or deliberately changed by the first editors during Śrīla Prabhupāda's lifetime. As we know, Śrīla Prabhupāda dictated his books and then they were transcribed; then the language editors were given authority to change the wording of the sentences. But throughout that process, sometimes unnecessary changes were made that needed correction because they diluted Śrīla Prabhupāda's sabda-pramana. If mistakes have occurred during this new correction, then it is indeed a deviation that must be corrected again by the appropriate committee in order to restore Śrīla Prabhupāda's original message.

And the second aspect is that to ensure that the explanation of the Scriptures is given without distortion, it should be given by persons who are already in a fully liberated state. Of course, we do not consider the question of the transmission of rasa, as it also has its own qualifications and it is beyond the scope of this book, but we are talking about simpler spiritual truths.

«If Arjuna is on the same level with Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is not superior to Arjuna, then their relationship of instructor and instructed becomes meaningless. If both of them are deluded by the illusory energy (maya), then there is no need of one being the instructor and the other the instructed. Such instruction would be useless because, in the clutches of maya, no one can be an authoritative instructor.» (Bhagavad-gīta, 2.13).

«You cannot defy authority, authority. As an authority, minister of this Unitarian Church, in one place he has denied authority, and in another place he has quoted so many authorities. So many authorities he has quoted. Why? If you deny authority, then why you quote other authority? So you cannot defy authority. This is not possible. From the beginning of your life, when you were child, you asked your parents, "Mother, father, what is this?" Why? That is the beginning of life. You cannot go even a step without authority. You are governed by authority. You are running your car by authority—"Keep to the right." Why? Why don't you defy it? So authority we have to obey. But the difficulty is: who is authority? That we require to learn who is actually authority. So authority means who has no mistakes, who has no illusion, who does not cheat, and whose senses are perfect. That is authority. That is the definition of authority» (Lecture, 15 June, 1968)

In such a situation when the books are not changed and everyone who transmits knowledge is at the necessary level, the authority is observed without additional instruments. However, as we understand within the preaching mission of ISKCON not every preacher is at the proper level,

especially the ones who preach to their friends and relatives. Therefore, there is a need for additional aspects to maintain authoritativeness.

First, by no means there must be individuals who can play the role of "siddhanta protectors," that is, who are qualified to transmit spiritual knowledge without distortion, and devotees must have full access to such individuals so that various deviations will not multiply in this or that part of our society.

Second, a thorough adherence to what they hear is necessary for all preachers (preaching to both devotees and non-devotees), and their kirtans, that is preaching or teaching others, are possible only on the ground of qualitative hearing:

«The first thing is you must be submissive. You should not think yourself that you are a... Do not be puffed up with false knowledge. Everyone, we should think that we are ignorant. We should have to receive knowledge. That should be the first step by me[?]. And receive knowledge, and try to assimilate it, and try to apply it, apply it with your body, with your mind, with your intelligence. Then the, you'll understand God so nicely that although God is unconquerable, you'll conquer Him. You'll conquer Him, by this simple process. So therefore sravanam, hearing, is so important. So in the devotional service the first step is hearing, hearing submissively from the authoritative source and just to assimilate it and grasp it with our body, mind and intelligence. In this way you shall be able to conquer the unconquerable. And when you are able to do such, then you can make kirtana, kirtana. That is, that is the... But another process is... Not another process, same process. Whatever you learn, if you describe it, then that will help you to elevate yourself in this path of knowledge. Suppose whatever you are hearing this night in this platform, if you try to repeat it amongst your friends, amongst your family members, then you'll be established in this knowledge. That is called kirtana. Sravanam kirtanam.» (Lecture, 1 December 1966).

Third, each re-transmitter of spiritual knowledge must be under the guidance, and eventually be connected to a person who can be a representative of the parampara to the fullest degree.

«The statements of Thakura Bhaktivinode are as good as Scriptures because he is liberated person. Generally the spiritual master comes from the group of such eternal associates of the Lord; but anyone who follows the principles of such ever liberated persons is as good as one in the above mentioned group... A person who is liberated acharya and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acharya by strictly following the disciplic succession.» (SPL to Janardana, 26 April, 1968).

There are several reasons for it. One of the most obvious is that hearing and repeating may be tainted by the false motives and a devotee's lower gunas, which they may not see in themselves. Thus, they will distort the original knowledge, even if they seem to merely repeat what they have heard.

The acceptance of guidance must be complete, at least as far as the transmission of spiritual knowledge to others is concerned. Of course, if a novice devotee is under the guidance of another Vaishnava, who is not much more experienced, there may be difficulties because the Vaishnava in the role of a senior may be wrong. But in that case, a senior must be available to help them. If a devotee rejects all guidance and begins to propagate their own concepts, then acting so they abandon their connection with the parampara and therefore cannot be accepted as a person who could play a role as a bearer of spiritual knowledge even theoretically:

«Everything, Kṛṣṇa..., Arjuna wanted to know from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, he has accepted Kṛṣṇa as the spiritual master, and spiritual master means the authority. Unless you accept somebody as quite fit for becoming your authority, he cannot become a spiritual master. You must be satisfied by the authoritative statement of the spiritual master. You cannot argue. That is the principle of authority» (Lecture, 7 June, 1974).

Thus, a devotee is authorized to retransmit spiritual knowledge by their seniors, and they are responsible for the quality of the transmission of that knowledge to those devotees.

«So this is the process. One should not be writing in spiritual subject matter without being authorized by some superior authority. It is not ordinary writing. The writing on spiritual subject matter is authoritative. By the order of superior authority, one can write. It is not speculation. Therefore he said that śrī-caitanyaṁ likhyate asya: "By the order of superior authority, I am trying to describe Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu» (Lecture, 1 March, 1975).

It involves supervision of those who give such knowledge, and it may include from an organizational perspective such elements as attestation and recertification. In any case, whatever the name of the process, such preaching must be guided. The less guidance is given and the less qualified the speaker is, the more the principle of authority is violated. There should be no distortion at the very least in the key points of our philosophy, the so-called siddhanta, which distinguishes us from other adepts of the spiritual path.

«Because when Caitanya Mahāprabhu was present at Jagannātha Purī, many people used to come, present so many literatures, so many commentaries, but Caitanya Mahāprabhu will not hear them unless it is passed by His secretary Svarūpa Dāmodara. First of all Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī will see whether it is written properly, according to siddhānta. Then he will allow. That was the business» (Lecture, 28 December, 1973).

Fourth, the preaching must match the level of realization of a devotee.

«The idea is that we should not make any addition or subtraction of mental speculation, but we should endeavor, even if we do not fully understand from our present platform, to present simply the philosophy as we have received it directly and realized it by practical experience» (SPL to Dinesh, January 22, 1970).

It must be understood that in fact, every Vaishnava, even the most exalted one, can speak about the Lord only within the limits of the authority they have received according to the depth of their spiritual realizations. The lower the level of realization, the fewer sabda-pramana truths a person can give. But if one tries to give truths above their level, they will be presented in a distorted way. Suta Goswami is a perfect example of correct conduct for us to follow (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.18.23):

«Translation: O ṛṣis, who are as powerfully pure as the sun, I shall try to describe to you the transcendental pastimes of Viṣṇu as far as my knowledge is concerned. As the birds fly in the sky as far as their capacity allows, so do the learned devotees describe the Lord as far as their realization allows.

Purport: The Supreme Absolute Truth is unlimited. No living being can know about the unlimited by his limited capacity. The Lord is impersonal, personal and localized. By His impersonal feature He is all-pervading Brahmana, by His localized feature He is present in everyone's heart as the Supreme Soul, and by His ultimate personal feature He is the object of transcendental loving service by His fortunate associates the pure devotees. The pastimes of the Lord in different features can only be estimated partly by the great learned devotees. So Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī has rightly taken this position in describing the pastimes of the Lord as far as he has realized. Factually only the Lord Himself can describe Himself, and His learned devotee also can describe Him as far as the Lord gives him the power of description.».

Fifth, there is a culture of quoting the Scriptures:

«He does not say, but he says on the authority of Srimad-Bhagavatam. That is scholarship. A scholar will not speak anything as he is thinking. No. He will give authoritative quotation to support. That is Vedic system. When you support your proposition with the Vedic version, then it is accepted. Otherwise not. Veda pramana» (Lecture, 9 October, 1976).

Scriptural quotation alone does not prove the correctness of the author's statements, since they can "pull in" the Scriptures according to their own words. However, such quotation is another factor in protecting knowledge from dilution, since a speaker must at least know the Scriptures' statements on a spoken subject. Senior and experienced Vaishnavas, there is no doubt in their knowledge, will also create an appropriate culture for the rest of us:

«So as we have seen that Lord Caitanya, when He instructs, He gives at once evidence from authoritative scripture, that is the way of presenting.» (Lecture, 5 December, 1966).

«So therefore Lord Caitanya says that simply by cultivation of knowledge that "I am not this matter. I am not this matter. I am spirit soul," that will not help. Now He gives again evidence from Scriptures. Every step, whatever He says, He gives some evidence from authoritative scripture. Mostly He gives evidence from Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam, because for the Vaisnava school these two books are sufficient for acquiring knowledge» (Lecture, 11 January, 1967).

«Acarya means one who knows sastra. He will not speak anything which is not in the sastra. He will never say, "In my opinion you can do like this." No. He must give evidence from the sastra. Therefore our practice is, whenever we speak something, immediately we quote from authoritative sastra. In this way...» (Lecture, 8 July, 1975).

Sixth, there is a well-known principle of protection called guru-sadhu-sastra, where every statement can be checked against these three sources to see if it is true.

«Therefore Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura sings: sādhu-śāstra-guru-vākya, cittete kariyā aikya. If we want to become saintly persons, or if we want to return to our original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we must associate with sādhu (a saintly person), śāstra (authoritative Vedic literature) and guru (a bona fide spiritual master). This is the process» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.26.12).

«Spiritual realization can be perfected by three parallel process. Sadhu. Sadhu means saintly persons, who are realized souls, sadhu. And sastra. Sastra means Scriptures, authoritative Scriptures, Vedic Scriptures, sastra. Sadhu, sastra, and guru, a spiritual master. Three parallel line. And if you place your car or vehicle on these three parallel line, your car will go direct to Kṛṣṇa. Cittete kariyā aikya. Just like in the railway line you see two parallel lines. If they are in order, the railway carriages are carried very smoothly to the destination. Here also, there are three parallel lines—sadhu, sastra, guru: saintly person, association of saintly person, acceptance of bona fide spiritual master, and faith in the Scriptures. That's all. Then your carriage will be going nicely, without any disturbance. Sadhu sastra guru vakya, cittete kariyā aikya» (Lecture, 18 October, 1968).

In this case, the role of a sadhu is to give an ideal example of his application of sastra principles in his own lives, while the role of a guru is to explain the application of sastras at our level. In this way, general principles, their ideal application in practice in different contexts, and appropriate application in relation to our abilities and qualifications as well are identified.

«Narottama dasa Thakura states that one has to ascertain the right path for his activities by following in the footsteps of great saintly persons and books of knowledge under the guidance of a spiritual master (sadhu-sastra-guru-vakya). A saintly person is one who follows the Vedic injunctions, which are the orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The word guru refers to one who gives proper direction under the authority of the Vedic injunctions and according to the examples of the lives of great personalities. The best way to mold one's life is to follow in the footsteps of the authorized personalities like those mentioned herein by Prthu Maharaja, beginning with Svayambhuva Manu. The safest path in life is to follow such great personalities, especially those mentioned in the Srimad-Bhagavatam» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 4.21.28-29).

«What is spoken in the scripture is accepted by saintly person, and what is spoken in the scripture, the spiritual master explains only that thing» (Lecture, 18 October 1968).

Seventh, the very process of devotional service, in which devotees are engaged, helps them by the Lord's mercy to acquire appropriate qualifications to gain the knowledge as well as the knowledge itself:

«The Vedas are My eternal transcendental sound incarnation. Therefore the Vedas are śabda-brahma. In this world, the brāhmaṇas thoroughly study all the Vedas, and because they assimilate the Vedic conclusions, they are also to be considered the Vedas personified. The brāhmaṇas are situated in the supreme transcendental mode of nature-sattva-guṇa. Because of this, they are fixed in mind control [śama], sense control [dama], and truthfulness [satya]. They describe the Vedas in their original sense, and out of mercy [anugraha] they preach the purpose of the Vedas to all conditioned souls. They practice penance [tapasya] and tolerance [titikṣā], and they realize the position of the living entity and the Supreme Lord [anubhava]. These are the eight qualifications of the brāhmaṇas. Therefore among all living entities, no one is superior to the brāhmaṇas.

PURPORT: This is a true description of a brāhmaṇa. A brāhmaṇa is one who has assimilated the Vedic conclusions by practicing mind and sense control. He speaks the true version of all the Vedas» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.5.24).

«But not a single person understood Kṛṣṇa, not a single person. But now, when they are reading Bhagavad-gita As It Is, they are understanding by the mercy of God. The mercy is shown if you follow the process, authoritative process» (Lecture, 3 March, 1975).

«By service of the bona fide spiritual master, the Lord consents to reveal Himself in proportion to the service rendered» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.5.23).

Eighth, in the Vedic culture there used to be debates between representatives of different worldviews, which also helped to maintain a necessary level of explanation of the Scriptures and guard against false interpretations.

«Caitanya Mahāprabhu confirmed by example that a preacher of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement generally should not waste his time talking with Māyāvādī sannyāsis, but when there are arguments on the basis of śāstra, a Vaiṣṇava must come forward to talk and defeat them in philosophy» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 7.67).

It must be noted here that discussions come in the different gunas of nature - vada, jalpa and vitanda.

«Among logicians there are different kinds of argument. Supporting one's argument with evidence that also supports the opposing side is called jalpa. Merely trying to defeat one's opponent is called vitaṇḍā. But the actual conclusion is called vāda. This conclusive truth is a representation of Kṛṣṇa.» (Bhagavad-gita, 10.32).

The author does not suggest that a culture of debate should be introduced into ISKCON as it is more associated with jalpa and vitanda in today's world, but vada-style discussions and philosophical debates are possible between Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

«A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such conclusions, considering them controversial, for such discussions strengthen the mind. Thus one's mind becomes attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.» (Caitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 2.117).

Ninth, the science of proper interpretation is a tool to protect the Scriptures from false interpretation; in the modern world it is called hermeneutics. It helps to explain the role and hierarchy of each statement of the Scriptures, the course of action if there are contradictory statements in the Scriptures, etc. The Scriptures Committee of GBC did an astounding work on this subject.

And finally, tenth, it must be understood that maintenance of the purity of the knowledge is controlled directly by the Lord, who Himself comes to maintain it. Moreover, the acharyas of our parampara, especially Śrīla Prabhupāda as sampsthapaka acharya, and Rupa Goswami (we are called rupanugas for a reason) also protect Krishna consciousness movement:

*«The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is conducted under the supervision of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.»
(The Nectar of Instructions, Introduction).*

Therefore, a sincere prayer is another and the most fundamental element to maintain the purity of the knowledge in our society.

[E.M. Vasushreshtha Das has contributed a small but important fragment to this book, which is given below]

A prayerful disposition enables one to develop the inner criteria of true absorption of the authoritative message of the Scriptures, gurus, and sadhus. The purity of the knowledge of a sincere devotee is maintained directly by the Lord in the heart as a chaitya guru.

“The preceptor appears before the external senses of the fortunate conditioned soul, and at the same time the devotee is guided from within by the caitya-guru Kṛṣṇa, who is seated as the spiritual master within the heart of the living entity.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita, Adi lila, 1.58, Comm)

It is ill-advised to think that the internal criteria to realize the principle of authority are solely subjective and therefore relative and "unreliable". Addressing to Brahma, Krishna Himself defines transcendental knowledge not only as "intimate" but also as "profoundly scientific" ("Chaitanya Charitamrita", Adi-lila, 1.51), that is, universal in its empirical manifestation of the inner experience of every living being.

Bhakti means... when you are advanced in bhakti... bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir anyatra [SB 11.2.42]. That's a test. So, an example is... When you are hungry and you are given some food, you eat greedily. But when you are satisfied, you say, "Enough! Enough!". Similarly, when you find Krishna, then you will say, "Enough! Nothing material!" (lecture, September 23, 1974)

So, there are credible scientific-experimental internal "tests" of the true authority of education, among which some of the most famous are recommended in the 11th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam (11.2.42): 1) bhaktiḥ (devotion) is "tested" by the experience of tuṣṭi (contentment, joy); 2) pareśānubhava (experience of the Supreme Lord) is "tested" by the experience of puṣṭi (nourishment), and 3) virakti (detachment) is "tested" by the experience of kṣud-apāya (a relief from hunger). Remarkably, in his commentary on this text Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur points out that the authoritative process of spiritual education is filled with joy and allows one to experience the ultimate goal to some extent already at sadhana-bhakti stage, when one follows all the rules without having a deep spiritual understanding:

"Just as a person who eats a little gets a little satisfaction, an incomplete feeling of stomach fullness and only a little relief from hunger, so a person who worships the Lord a little through sravanam-kirtanam gets a little experience of the Lord and a little break from material life. Similarly, a person who eats a lot and therefore receives complete satisfaction, complete nourishment and complete relief from hunger can be compared to a devotee who is totally immersed in the worship of the Lord and experiences the Lord entirely and is completely detached from material life" (Saratha-darshini, vol. 9, p. 31).

A practical example of bhakti: if you become pure bhakta, then you will forget all material sensual pleasure: bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir anyatra. That is the test of bhakti. But if you have a taste for material enjoyment and at the same time, you exhibit yourself as being a bhakta, then that is not bhakti. One who knows who a bhakta is, they immediately notice that "it is not a bhakta" - ei dharma dadi: he has tilaka and kanthimāla just as an advertisement. He is not a bhakta because he has material taste (lecture, 26 November 1974).

[end of the fragment from E.M. Vasushreshthi dasa]

We have now discussed the principle of educational authority, and we have outlined the mechanisms for maintaining this principle in our society. It is worth answering another question about authority - is it possible to rely on the knowledge that does not come from the Scriptures?

Using Knowledge from outside the Scriptures

As far as the spiritual knowledge is concerned, the answer is obvious: as discussed above, the Scriptures and representatives of the Parampara are its only source. As for material knowledge that



can be engaged in the service (e.g., skills to drive a car) we have talked about it during the discussion of the principle of yukta-vairagya within the of the consistency of education.

However, the answer is not so obvious when it comes to the science of learning. Is it possible to utilise contemporary developments in pedagogy, andragogy, and psychology? After all, on the one hand, these could be engaged in the service as everyday skills, but on the other hand, they may have a different format for transferring knowledge than the original process.

The culture of Western education developed over many centuries. The philosophers of ancient Greece were its founders. Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Democritus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other scholars of that time laid a foundation for ideas and approaches to education in the West. Subsequently, didactics (i.e., educational theory) was predominantly practised by the philosophers and scholars of religious movements.

That was not a coincidence. An important point to note is that teaching methods derive from the theory of learning, which in turn is shaped by the ideology behind it. That is, a worldview is a core of everything, and an understanding of what a person should become is constructed according to it, and the most appropriate educational methods are chosen for this purpose. Unlike, for example, driving skills are not directly based on any worldview.

Hence there is an important practical implication. When choosing a particular form of learning, one cannot simply adopt it. It is necessary to analyse a worldview which seeds it bears within and, if necessary, to separate an instrument from the worldview. Also, there is a possibility of the transformation of an instrument itself. Firstly, it is quite possible that even an instrument contains a seed of the philosophy of atheism. And secondly, an instrument may have a significant mixture of the gunas of passion and ignorance, since in today's world almost anything successful and practical is usually associated with the gunas of passion:

«Civilization is considered to be advanced in the standard of the mode of passion. Formerly, the advanced condition was considered to be in the mode of goodness.» (Bhagavad-gita, 14.7).

For example, in a wider socium interactive learning suggests a possibility of understanding the world with one's own mind, which is an atheistic approach. Even the methods of learning the truth are often based not on the principles of goodness but on the principles of lower gunas, for example, debates that do not adhere to the Vedic rules of debate. Modern secular psychology is another example, it is predominantly based on atheistic dogmas.

Let us also use a historical example to illustrate the point. We know that Aristotle was a disciple of Plato. However, their world views were strikingly different. Aristotle's famous phrase "Plato is a friend, but the truth is even a better friend" is the best illustration of it.

In terms of worldview, Aristotle saw the world as one, whereas Plato saw the world as divided into two, conventionally speaking the world of ideas and the world of objects. It is difficult to see immediately what practical significance it might have for our lives, but as we know, in the teachings of Jesus Christ Christian Church was initially extremely close to Plato's ideas. However, both from the very beginning and centuries later, there were also adherents of Aristotle's ideas. For example, Thomas Aquinas (13th century), introduced important postulates into the ideology of the modern church. The task of Thomas Aquinas was to synchronise the church with the scientific society of that time, and so he began to use certain Aristotle's approaches to comprehend the world. For example, following Aristotle, who saw the world as a single entity, Thomas described that only the union of a body and a soul created a human individuality and that a soul was complete only when united with a body. While a body is only an instrument of its action in this world, a soul does not exist itself but as directly connected with a body and inseparable from it. This might seem very abstract, but several postulates followed from it. For example, in Christianity resurrection was now seen precisely in the same body a person had previously lived because in another body a person would have had a different identity. Or that only a human had a complete soul but not animals, because only a human possessed a will and a desire for knowledge, which is a unique union of a soul and a body. This is why, Christianity, in particular, still sees no problem in killing animals. It all started with a simple attempt to synchronise the teachings of the Church in a way that was in line with Aristotle's approach to comprehend the world.

Or let us recall another example from the description of the principle of spirituality, in which the originally genuine idea of education in accordance with the individual's characteristics was coated with the gunas of passion and ignorance which caused extremely disastrous consequences. It is important to stress that the original idea remained the same, but due to the influence of the lower gunas it was transformed into other, unworkable, and sometimes hideous models. Then, as usually happens, there is a rejection of the idea by a society and a shift to its opposite. For example, total liberalisation and the idea of universal equality, which started almost three hundred years ago, is still cultivated today.

In fact, if we look at the world of recent centuries, perverted forms of Vedic ideas (castes, monarchy, patriarchy), distorted forms of rural life, and dogmatic religiosity have been completely rejected by the modern world, and the exact opposite values have been proclaimed. It all happened under the banner of a progress and development, moving away from the remnants of "primitive" society. But in fact, one form of ignorance, only superficially resembling Vedas, was simply replaced by another.

We gave an example of the varnashrama above, but it is important to note that all educational elements may also be present in their original, pure nature, or they may be coloured by various combinations of gunas. Here is an example of such an educational element. Asceticism is one of the qualities of a brahmana manifested in his activities. To form this quality in the respective people is undoubtedly a part of the educational system of a healthy society. Asceticism is cultivated at the level of goodness by following the practices prescribed by the Scriptures and in the right state of consciousness:

«Austerity of the body consists in worship of the Supreme Lord, the brāhmaṇas, the spiritual master, and superiors like the father and mother, and in cleanliness, simplicity, celibacy and nonviolence. Austerity of speech consists in speaking words that are truthful, pleasing, beneficial, and not agitating to others, and also in regularly reciting Vedic literature. And satisfaction, simplicity, gravity, self-control and purification of one's existence are the austerities of the mind. This threefold austerity, performed with transcendental faith by men not expecting material benefits but engaged only for the sake of the Supreme, is called austerity in goodness.» (Bhagavad-gita, 17.14-17).

The same educational practices but carried out with altered motives would be practices in the guna of passion:

«Penance performed out of pride and for the sake of gaining respect, honor and worship is said to be in the mode of passion. It is neither stable nor permanent.» (Bhagavad-gita, 17.18).

On the contrary, the distortion of the practices to develop an ascetic character would not lead to a proper result at all as it belongs to the guna of ignorance:

«Penance performed out of foolishness, with self-torture or to destroy or injure others, is said to be in the mode of ignorance.» (Bhagavad-gita, 17.19).

The practice of self-torture carried out as an "enlightening" (i.e., educational) practice in various religious movements could be an example of such a practice. Although the original message how to develop asceticism is correct, it has become the opposite under the influence of the refraction through the lower gunas.

Some people might want to take what seems to be a more conservative path from their point of view by adopting classical Vedic model of India instead of the so-called "Western model". However, it should be noted here that the system of building a society and in particular an educational system has undergone a few transformations since Vedic times. In the beginning it was influenced by Buddhism, when all social institutions were built in accordance with its philosophical doctrine; then by Shankaracharya's imperialism; then through Muslimism and the corresponding culture in the times of Muslim invasions; and finally, through Anglicization, when India was colonized. Thus, the original culture was severely perverted, and one cannot learn it from the historical descriptions of that period; one can only get a description of an already perverted social structure from them. One cannot receive a reliable description of Vedic social structure that existed in India before the domination of the philosophy of emptiness from modern historians. What credibility can you expect from "scholarly" historians if they, despite being of Hindu origin, believe that Srimad Bhagavatam was composed in the 8th-10th centuries after the birth of Jesus Christ? So, the "pro-Vedic" culture outside the Scriptures, just like the pro-Western culture, is contaminated by the same seeds of atheism, mainly impersonalism, and heavily distorted by the lower gunas though to a lesser extent.

Thus, if we consider the experience of the West and the East outside ISKCON, as well as the Vaishnava's ideas proposed in ISKCON itself in all areas, including education, then all these ideas could also be viewed through the prism of the filter that purifies from the lower gunas as well as from the false atheistic basis. Most of the ideas have the right seed though is in a distorted shell that depends on the degree of conditioning of its author.

Therefore, the application of educational practices from the wider society cannot replace the Scriptures and cannot simply be transplanted from a materialistic society into a spiritual society. But if we cannot figure out how to put the instructions of the Scriptures into practice, we can turn to the experience of education outside ISKCON to find ideas there, and then we must filter them through purified consciousness. In this way the ideas are transformed, or to be more precise reconstituted anew through the prism of a Vaishnava's vision, although outwardly they may resemble their original prototype. Certainly, such new instruments can be useful in the service to ISKCON, even though their prototype are created by materialists for the purpose of sense gratification.

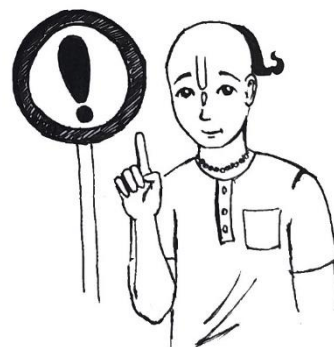
«I am to understand that you have professional managerial experience and are presently engaging your talents to strengthen the managerial position of our N.Y. center. That is very valuable service and I thank you very much. We learn from Srimad-Bhagavatam that a person may be situated in any occupational duty but the perfection of such activity is tested by the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. And because you are engaging your talents in His service, surely Krishna will be pleased upon you and give you all facility for advancement in Krishna Consciousness.» (SPL to Atreya Rsi, May 17, 1971)

Common Mistakes in the Principle of Authority:

1. to disregard the authoritative knowledge and to practice "freestyle" bhakti-yoga that is not based on the Scriptures. The acharyas claim that the only result of such devotional service would be the disturbance in a society;

As the analysis of the yukta-vairagya suggests, it is meant that the practices should be based on the principles of the Scriptures but not contradict them. At the same time, they are not necessarily listed in the Scriptures. Thus, driving is not listed as one of the angas but it may be. For example, one should not consider driving a car aimlessly around a town drunk as devotional service. Of course, it is an exaggerated example, although the principle may manifest itself in more subtle ways, i.e., deviation from the format of Deity worship, etc;

2. to perceive pratyaksha and anumana as real evidence and to reject sabda. Of course, no one will say so in practice, but in real life we can see how devotees often strongly rely on pratyaksha and anumana. That said, if they come across with a statement of the Scriptures



that contradicts their sensory experience, they reject such an understanding usually on the pretext that it is apparently a wrong understanding of sabda because it contradicts their sensory observation. It can be either a correct or an incorrect assumption. Therefore, pratyaksha and anumana must always be proven by sabda and cannot serve as valid evidence as such;

3. on the other hand, not to realize that we ourselves may not fully understand sabda-pramana;

And (in cases if our understanding is really wrong) to pressurize with our own misunderstanding of the Scriptures, which contradicts common sense based on anumana and pratyaksha. A good example of it is Christians' misunderstanding of the postulates about the geocentricity of the planetary system, already mentioned above. It does not mean that whenever a shastra contradicts so-called common sense, we should choose common sense. It is just other way round. But it must be kept in mind that we ourselves may not possess the full sabda pramana if the process of its transmission has been violated and therefore, we may be mistaken;

Or, if we make this mistake, we may a priori consider an alternative realisation of other devotees who also base their understanding on sabda-pramana to be wrong. Then comes a lack of willingness to discuss these topics constructively in a proper vada culture using the principles and tools of Gaudiya Vaishnava hermeneutics. It also includes a lack of discussion of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books among devotees, which implies both a lack of discussion and an abundance of discussion but in isolation from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books;

4. to present our own interpretations of the Scriptures without understanding what Śrīla Prabhupāda and previous ācāryas have said about them. Thus, we can significantly distort the meaning of some statements of the Scriptures, including Bhagavad Gīta and Srimad Bhagavatam, if we do not know how our parampara explains them;
5. to accept the edition of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books as a change in his books, rather than to return to the original text that Śrīla Prabhupāda compiled;
6. to attempt to "jump" over Śrīla Prabhupāda to the previous acharyas by studying their books, either not doing so through the lens of what Śrīla Prabhupāda said, or placing the teachings of the previous acharyas and the original Scriptures in a hierarchy above Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements.

This issue has already been addressed above, so we will not discuss it here or prove it with the references. The point is that the Scriptures and the previous acharyas must be understood through the prism of the parampara. Moreover, Śrīla Prabhupāda holds the key role of the Founder-Acharya. Therefore, even though Śrīla Prabhupāda is a disciple of the

previous parampara and does not deviate from the original Scriptures, for us his teachings are higher up the hierarchical ladder in explanation of the previous statements;

7. to attempt to interpret the conduct of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings in isolation from the Scriptures, pārapāra and tradition. Since Śrīla Prabhupāda did not say anything "on his behalf," all his statements are related to scripture and tradition. When we understand this connection, Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements become easier to understand. Thus, studying books of the previous acharyas can help us understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's mood more deeply, if we do not make the previous mistake;
8. to try to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda bypassing our bond with him in the form of the parampara that connects us to him. It also includes the view that we should listen only to Śrīla Prabhupāda or, conversely, that it is not enough to read his books and receive instructions mainly from other sources;
9. to attempt to absolutize the instructions of one's diksha or siksha guru without understanding that they represent Śrīla Prabhupāda being a faithful servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the GBC council. This mistake occurs when a devotee is satisfied with the authority of one's spiritual master's instructions without trying to relate them also to Śrīla Prabhupāda, to understand the place of those instructions in Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision. One may think that this statement contradicts the previous one. The point is that we do not try to challenge our spiritual masters or other spiritual authorities, but we do not remain blind and we humbly try to understand the connection between these teachings and Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and, humbly ask for clarification of this connection if necessary;

Another and more difficult for devotees to understand misconception is that they consider the real parampara in ISKCON to be diksha parampara. This misconception is quite natural, since in devotees' minds the connection is precisely from one spiritual master to another. However, first of all, this connection is by no means always directly related to diksha in our tradition, since siksha-parampara is given preference. For example, Bhaktivinoda Thakur's diksha guru was not Jagannath Das Babaji but Bipin Bihari Gosvami, and Gaura-kishore Das Babaji's diksha guru was not Baladeva Vidyabhushana or Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur but Nandakishore Gosvami. Whereas Vishwanatha Chakravarti Thakur, who is after Narottam das Thakur in our disciplic succession, was born after the latter had left.

Secondly, Śrīla Prabhupāda chose a non-canonical traditional continuation of the parampara. Traditionally there was one acharya, and he would appoint a subsequent acharya who would become the chief authority for his spiritual brothers and the only diksha guru in the whole chain after his departure, and it would be repeated. On the other hand, Śrīla Prabhupāda in his testament of June 1977 established a collective GBC council as the highest governing body instead of one acharya giving authority to the others: "1.

The GBC Council shall be the highest governing body of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness." At the same time there are many different diksha gurus in ISKCON. Everything else remains the same, for example, it is the GBC Council that gives a diksha guru the authority to accept disciples on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the entire parampara. It is also the GBC that decides matters relating to deviation and maintenance of siddhanta, including the diksha guru of the society. That is, the council remains the highest authority instead of one acharya. But this does not cancel its role as the supreme authority, not just an administrative body. Thus, a diksha guru cannot be seen as a separate individual connecting us with Śrīla Prabhupāda directly (in the case of a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda) or through his spiritual master (in the case of subsequent generations of diksha gurus). The connection is always through the GBC board as well, and therefore the statements of a spiritual master must not contradict it;

10. not to consciously demonstrate connection with the seniors or to present one's subjective opinion on a matter as absolute knowledge.

Younger devotees tend to take at face value the knowledge they receive from the seniors, but the seniors must follow proper ethics of imparting such knowledge. Therefore, when they are unsure of the depth of their realizations on certain topics, it must be honestly explained that it is an author's subjective understanding of the Scriptures. A reason to think about it may be the presence of alternative views from other senior Vaishnavas at sound spiritual status;

A more subtle manifestation of this mistake is when the juniors show their gratitude to the one who directly cares about them and imparts spiritual knowledge to them but do not extend that gratitude to the seniors. Therefore, devotees, engaged in education must, make a sincere and conscious effort to cultivate such gratitude by showing their disciplic connection with the seniors. What is meant here is not an attempt to establish authority at the expense of the seniors to prove the validity of their incorrect understanding of the Scriptures but, on the contrary, to communicate to them gratitude from their juniors for the correct understanding they have received. Otherwise, the seniors risk becoming attached to the honour they receive and becoming a promoter of a small personal cult around themselves instead of being a transparent medium;

11. not quoting in full Śrīla Prabhupāda or the Scriptures on the subject matter of discussion. Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings must be viewed in their entirety. If Śrīla Prabhupāda made various statements on the same subject matter, it is necessary to take them all into account in teaching not to reject and silence those statements that do not fit into the paradigm of our understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. In such a case, we make a mistake that is essentially nondifferent from that of the impersonalists.

«Either they do not believe in the śāstras or they interpret them in their own way, using ardha-kukkuṭi-nyāya [Cc. Ādi-līlā 5.176], "the logic of half a hen." Once a man kept a hen that

delivered a golden egg every day. The foolish man thought, "It is very profitable, but it is expensive to feed this hen. Better that I cut off her head and save the expense of feeding her. Then I will get the egg without any charge." The impersonalists accept the śāstras in this way. They think, "Oh, this is not good; it is inconvenient. We shall cut this portion out.» (Lecture, 13 December, 1970).

12. to perceive the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda outside of his mood. It is not easy to understand the heart of a pure devotee, especially if one tries to do so only through the written words that he once spoke. At the same time, one must understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings are to be seen through the prism of his moods. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda was very harsh when he spoke about materialistic people:

«Śrīla Prabhupāda. Yes, that is stated in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: śva-vid-varāhoṣṭra-kharaiḥ samstutaḥ puruṣaḥ paśuḥ.[4] This verse indicates that those who praise men who are like animals are no better than dogs, hogs, camels and asses. Śva means "dog," vid-varāha means "stool-eating hog," uṣṭra means "camel," and khara means "ass." If the Nobel Prize is given to a scientist who is a rascal, the men on the committee who give him that prize are no better than dogs, hogs, camels and asses. We don't accept them as human beings. One animal is praised by another animal. Where is the credit in that? If the men on the committee are no better than animals, anyone who receives the Nobel Prize in science is fool number one, because animals are praising him, not human beings.

Dr. Singh. For some scientists, the Nobel Prize is the ultimate.

Śrīla Prabhupāda. They are rascals. They are speaking nonsense, and because they are juggling words, others are being misled.

Brahmānanda Swami. Nobel is the person who invented dynamite.

Śrīla Prabhupāda. He has created great misfortune, and he has left his money for creating further misfortune.» (Morning walk, April 19, 1973.).

And one may try to get into "Śrīla Prabhupāda's mood," thinking that this mood is a categorical malice towards the world around him. But by doing so, one will go in the opposite direction from Śrīla Prabhupāda, even though one appears to say the same thing. Because such emphatic statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda were the result of his tremendous compassion, like the words of a parent who severely reprimands a child with no malice in his heart toward the child. Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda's various instructions must be understood in terms of his mood and mission;

13. not to understand the differences where Śrīla Prabhupāda's or the Scriptures instruction is a principle true at all times and circumstances, where it is a general rule that is usually correct, and where its application to a particular context is relevant or irrelevant to us.

Generally, in this sense Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are thought to be more important than his lectures and letters because in the latter he instructed particular people, and that may

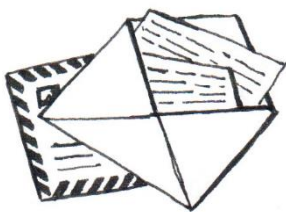
be irrelevant to us. However, it is somewhat simplified approach and far from being correct.

For example, in his book Śrīla Prabhupāda describes a principle that explains why ISKCON supports polygamy:

«The social structure allowing a man to marry more than one wife can be supported in this way. Generally in every society the female population is greater in number than the male population. Therefore if it is a principle in the society that all girls should be married, unless polygamy is allowed it will not be possible. If all the girls are not married there is a good chance of adultery, and a society in which adultery is allowed cannot be very peaceful or pure. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness society we have restricted illicit sex. The practical difficulty is to find a husband for each and every girl. We are therefore in favor of polygamy, provided, of course, that the husband is able to maintain more than one wife.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 14.58).

However, in relation to the principle of authority, another important point should be highlighted: while translating books, it is impossible to always fully convey all the emphases of the original Scriptures. Thus, in the above quote, the phrase "we have no objection in principle to polygamy" is used even though Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement in English is more accurately sounded as "we are for polygamy". At the same time, we know that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself forbade polygamy in our society because the general rule could not be applied in view of the time, place and circumstances:

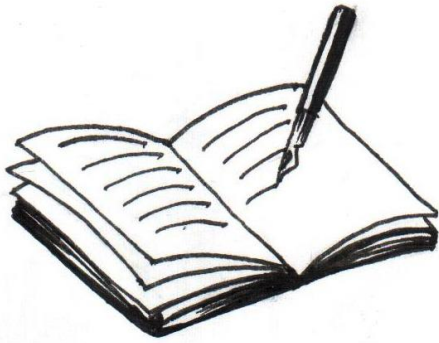
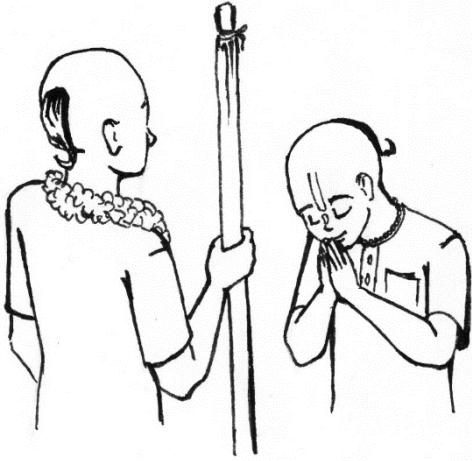
«After conferring with my various GBC representatives I have concluded that polygamy must be strictly prohibited in our society. Although it is a Vedic institution still there are so many legal implications. Neither are many of our men fixed up enough to tend for more than one wife. Polygamy will simply increase the sex life and our philosophy is to gradually decrease the sex life till eventually there is no sex life. The policy should be that all the women are given the utmost protection. Women are looking for husbands because they feel unprotected so it is up to the senior members to give all protection to the women.» (SPL to Rupanuga, February 14, 1973).



Thus, we can see that the letter which explained the application of a general principle from the books in our circumstances proved to be superior to the book in this matter. In this regard, it must be remembered that there are three categories: the principles for all times; the general rules to be applied with the context in mind; and the instructions with descriptions of an individual application already altered with the context in mind. And one must interpret Śrīla Prabhupāda's legacy statements according to this division;

14. to substitute the goal while preaching, when instead of showing the ultimate goal as well as the intermediate steps towards it, we offer people only the next step (e.g., the guna of goodness) and present it as the ultimate goal;
15. to use the shastra to prove our opinion or way of doing things (usually it comes from our old culture) instead of understanding the principles of the Scriptures with an attempt to engage contemporary context to elaborate on the vision of the Scriptures. For example, instead of understanding the principles of education from the Scriptures and thinking what tools can be used to implement them, we take instruments from, for example, a university or other educational institution and try to justify their authority by the Scriptures. That is, the difference lies in whether we start from the Scriptures and look for a means to apply them in life, or we start with our limited material experience and adjust the Scriptures to fit it in;
16. insufficient attention to what our teachers, preachers, and the rest of devotees involved in the transmission of spiritual knowledge preach in our educational institutions. In this case, attention also implies feedback with a view to correct all deficiencies of imperfect preaching. The flip side of the same mistake is the lack of opportunity for devotees to hear from the seniors, locking them up with younger Vaishnavas who may transmit knowledge with distortions;
17. the lack of a culture to quote the Scriptures. A conscious understanding of the Scriptures is important and valuable. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself was a perfect example; despite his unique vision and synthesis of various aspects of spiritual science he always referred to the tradition and the Scriptures that existed before him;
18. to remove a sadhu from the guru-sadhu-shastra formula. His role is to personify an ideal adherence to the Scriptures in his life, and this also requires one to consult with him in order to maintain purity of knowledge;
19. an attempt to use knowledge of material sciences not from the Scriptures, influenced by a certain mindset of their authors, without verifying the knowledge with the principles of the Scriptures through the appropriate filters for consistency and for the absence of unnecessary elements of the gunas of passion and ignorance. Moreover, it is wrong when it is done by unqualified persons who themselves are not well-established in the guna of goodness, devotional service, and the principles from the Scriptures. To reject material knowledge at the root, and even its ideas could be used in the service to the Lord.

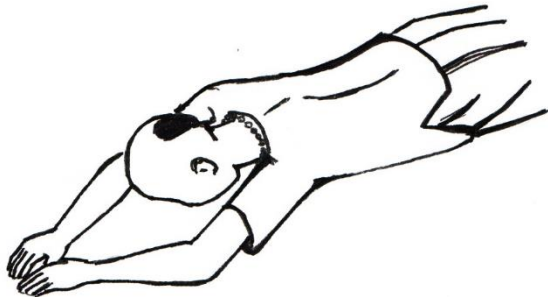
Principle of Accepting Living Guidance



Essential works on the topic

The author would like to avoid a superficial duplication of the truths that are addressed in much greater depth in the more fundamental works of ISKCON spiritual teachers. However, the purpose of this work is to provide a concise but complete picture of the role of the principle of living guidance and its application to the contemporary realities of our society.

Principle of accepting living guidance



Since we are talking about principle, it is worth seeing that living guidance is also present everywhere in the world. There are schools, institutes, and other educational institutions in a broader human community where people teach others. Everything related to helping people grow has been based predominantly on face-to-face contact for centuries across all cultures. Even human life as a whole is connected to someone

else's care from the very beginning. A human body, unlike bodies of many other living beings, is designed so that a child cannot survive on its own; so, from the first days of life parents take care of the child. But even among animal forms of life this principle is exhibited in general where cubs are taught by the older individuals. On the other hand, even Lord Brahma needed guidance before he

started the secondary creation of the universe. So, we can see that to accept guidance in life is another principle of education manifested everywhere in our life both on the micro and macro level.

It applies equally, and perhaps even more, to spiritual education. You and I hear about the importance of a spiritual teacher from the very first days of our association with the devotional community. The Scriptures have a great deal to say about it:

«The Vedas (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12) give the direction tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet: in order to reach the perfection of life or to understand the real constitutional position of the living entity, one must approach the spiritual master. Gurum evābhigacchet — one must; it is not optional. It is imperative that one approach the spiritual master, for by such association one proportionately develops his consciousness toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.21.35 purport).

In our sampradaya Śrīla Rupa Goswami, echoing Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, pointed out that the spiritual path begins with accepting a spiritual master:

«On the path of regulative devotional service, one must observe the following items: (1) One must accept a bona fide spiritual master. (2) One must accept initiation from him. (3) One must serve him. (4) One must receive instructions from the spiritual master and make inquiries in order to learn devotional service. (5) One must follow in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas and follow the directions given by the spiritual master.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhyalīla, 22.115).

Acharyas of the past and even the Lord Himself proved the importance of accepting a spiritual master by their example:

«Even the great transcendental scholar Vyāsadeva had need of a spiritual master, and under the instruction of his spiritual master, Nārada, he prepared this sublime literature, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Even Lord Caitanya, although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, accepted a spiritual master; even Lord Kṛṣṇa accepted a spiritual master, Sāndīpani Muni, in order to be enlightened; and all the ācāryas and saints of the world had spiritual masters. In Bhagavad-gītā Arjuna accepted Lord Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master, although there was no necessity of such a formal declaration.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.7.39).

Śrīla Prabhupāda also repeatedly emphasised an important role of a spiritual master in our practice:

«One should therefore approach an authorized person to understand Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master has actually seen Kṛṣṇa; therefore he can explain Him properly. Without approaching an authorized person, one cannot understand Kṛṣṇa» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.12.11).

If we look at Śrīla Prabhupāda's legacy in the form of his letters, lectures, and books, we see that he mentioned the words "guru" or "spiritual master" about half as often as he even mentioned the words "Hare Krishna". It proves the absolute necessity of living guidance for the successful spiritual growth of devotees.

Reason for necessity of living guidance



If we try to understand the principle of the necessity of living guidance, it can be described as follows: every living being is designed to act for someone or something; it cannot choose not to act.

«When you go to the office, apparently you work for the master. But I don't work for the master; I work for the money. And why I want money? For my sense gratification. Then ultimately I am working for my sense gratification—

neither for the master nor for the money. This is our aim, for my sense gratification. The same sense, when it will be applied to Kṛṣṇa, that I am working for Kṛṣṇa, that is our liberated stage. Svarupena avasthiti. This is our real constitutional position. We have to work for somebody else. You cannot work independently. Either for your family or for your master or for your state or for your community or for your... Everyone. Nobody is independent» (Lecture, 12 February, 1973).

If a living being wants to escape from the trap of illusion, it needs to try to act for the Lord. But because of the immersion of consciousness in matter it cannot yet understand how to act for the Lord; so it can act for His representative, a spiritual master.

«The criterion is that a devotee must know what Kṛṣṇa wants him to do. This understanding can be achieved through the medium of a spiritual master who is a bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises, ādau gurv-āśrayam. One who is serious in wanting to render pure devotional service to the Lord must take shelter of a spiritual master who comes in the disciplic succession from Kṛṣṇa. Evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ. Without accepting a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, one cannot find out the real purpose of devotional service. Therefore one has to accept the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and agree to be directed by him. The first business of a pure devotee is to satisfy his spiritual master, whose only business is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And if one can satisfy the spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa is automatically satisfied — yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ. This is the success of devotional service. This is the meaning of the word ānukūlyena — that is, favorable devotional service to the Lord» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila, 19-167).

One has to understand what Kṛṣṇa wants. When there is that intimate relationship, then one can serve Kṛṣṇa most favorably. And as long as there is not that intimate relationship, one must

take information of what Kṛṣṇa wants through the transparent medium of the spiritual master. («Science of Self-realization, 8b).

Thus, a devotee can attain perfection in life simply by concentrating on the instructions of one's spiritual master and serving him. And since the instructions are not even limited by place and time, the contact of a disciple with a spiritual master in a proper state of consciousness cannot really be limited by any circumstance.

«So far personal association with the Guru is concerned, I was only with my Guru Maharaja four or five times, but I have never left his association, not even for a moment. Because I am following his instructions, I have never felt any separation.» (SPL to Satadhanya, Calcutta, 20 February, 1972).

«Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura remarks that unless one is very highly elevated in loving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot see Him as He is. Nonetheless, if one sticks to the principles enunciated by the spiritual master, somehow or other he is in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since the Lord is in the heart, He can advise a sincere disciple from within.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 4.28.51, Purport).

One may assume from the previous statement that it is enough to accept Śrīla Prabhupāda or one of the previous ācāryas as a spiritual master and follow his teachings. We will not go into detail here to question this philosophy as there are a lot of written works about it. Those who would like to explore this subject further may read the relevant books of ISKCON's spiritual masters. Here we shall only mention the culture of parampara as an instrument of the principle of authority and briefly recall two quotes already cited earlier, which confirm that we are talking about a contact with a living spiritual master:

«If you want to understand Bhagavad-gītā, then we must understand in the same way as the person who directly heard from him. This is called paramparā system. Suppose I have heard something from my spiritual master, so I speak to you the same thing. So this is paramparā system. You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called paramparā system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, I mean to say, neglecting the next ācārya, immediate next ācārya.» (Lecture, 8 December, 1973).

«One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books ... One must accept a Vaiṣṇava guru (ādau gurv-āśrayam), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is. That is called the paramparā system.» (Caitanya-charitamrita, Antya-lila, 7.53).

Since the Lord Himself establishes the system of parampara, as mentioned in the principle of authority, even if a devotee is qualified enough to receive instructions from Krishna directly or to derive them from Śrīla Prabhupāda's legacy and follow them faithfully, they still accept a living

spiritual master and are under his guidance because they understand that it is what Krishna wants, and also to set an example for others.

«Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has said that in order to preach one must live a practical life and show people how to do things. Apani acari' bhakti sikhaimu sabare. One cannot teach others unless he behaves the same way himself. Rsabhadeva was an ideal king, and He took His education in the guru-kula, although He was already educated because the Supreme Lord is omniscient. Although Rsabhadeva had nothing to learn from guru-kula, He went there just to teach the people in general how to take an education from the right source» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.4.8).

At some point in Christianity, a protestant system emerged because of the rejection of Catholic concept that a priest was necessary as a mediator between a believer and the Lord. And this confrontation between these two concepts is still happening, even though they both contain half the truth. It is important for us to understand that our perception of a spiritual master differs from Catholic understanding. Though a disciple interacts with the Lord only through a spiritual master, their experience of contact with the Lord is immediate, like electricity can reach us only through wires. But when it reaches us, we can have a living experience of contact with it. Similarly, we have a living experience of contact with Krishna directly, but He reveals Himself to us only if we act in the right way and according to the system He established.

Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone's heart as the caitya-guru, the spiritual master within. When He is kind to some fortunate conditioned soul, He personally gives him lessons so he can progress in devotional service, instructing the person as the Supersoul within and the spiritual master without. (Chaitanya-charitamṛta, Madhya-lila 22.47)

Thus, the Lord Himself provides living guidance in devotees' lives and, therefore, one of the aspects of education is an ability to perceive the Lord's instructions in one's life. To help a disciple see these lessons is one of the duties of a spiritual master.

Therefore, since it requires a certain depth of maturity and not every disciple is capable to fully concentrate and structure their lives around the teachings of a once-living spiritual master or Supersoul, the Lord sends a living spiritual master to help a disciple from outside:

This refers to the Supersoul, who is sitting in everyone's heart. He helps from within as stated in Bhagavad-gītā, and He sends the spiritual master, who helps from without. The spiritual master is the external manifestation of the caitya-guru, or the spiritual master sitting in everyone's heart. (Shrimad Bhagavatam, 4.8.44).

It follows that the necessity of accepting living guidance is also related to the needs of a devotee, and if a spiritual master does not help to fully satisfy them from outside, their spiritual life considerably slows down if not stops altogether.

So, let us consider what needs of a seeker on the spiritual path can be fulfilled by the presence of a spiritual master in their life. Obviously, there are common points. For example, the Scriptures state that a disciple becomes able to see the Lord everywhere through a spiritual master:

«I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, who with the torchlight of knowledge has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance.» (Gautamīya Tantra) The guru's task is to open the disciple's eyes of knowledge. When the disciple is awakened from ignorance to knowledge, he can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead everywhere» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 8.1.11, purport).

These are undoubtedly important aspects, but they are more in the category of ultimate fruit. In this case, we are interested in the most practical and observable actions that a spiritual master can provide help on the spiritual path. It is possible that a complete list of these aspects is already compiled by some of the acharyas, but the author is not familiar with it because of his ignorance. In any case, we could not find one, so here we would like to compile it and base it on Śrīla Prabhupāda's various references regarding the role of a spiritual master or spiritual leader in a disciple's life. It is important to emphasize that we do not refer to a diksha guru or speak in the context of ISKCON. We would simply make a list of the needs that a guru can help a disciple with. And then it will be necessary to overlay this list with the contemporary realities of our society. It should also be noted that this work does not claim to present an all-inclusive list of such needs, which however does not detract from its practicality. At the same time, a respected reader may find it reasonable to expand this list in their own meditation on the subject. And, of course, this work does not speak of the realms of raganuga, rasa, etc. but stays within the framework of the first four stages of spiritual development.

Thus:

- 1. Spiritual master helps his disciple to understand how to become engaged in devotional service to Krishna.**

«Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommends pure devotional service. There should be no desire to fulfill one's own material desires, there should be no attempt to understand Kṛṣṇa by experimental philosophy, and there should be no fruitive activities to derive material benefits from Kṛṣṇa. The only desire should be to serve Him favorably, as He desires. If Kṛṣṇa wants something, then we should do it. Suppose I were to ask a disciple, "My dear student, please give me a glass of water." It is then his duty to give me a glass of water. If he thinks, "Prabhupāda wants a glass of water, but why not give him something better? Why not a glass of hot milk?" that is not service. In his consideration, hot milk is very palatable and is better than water, yet because I have asked for water, he has to give me water, not milk. That is favorable service. One has to understand what Kṛṣṇa wants. When there is that intimate relationship, then one can serve Kṛṣṇa most favorably. And as long as there is not that intimate relationship, one must take information of what Kṛṣṇa wants through the transparent medium of the spiritual master.» («Science of Self-realization», 8b).

«The real fact is that a bona fide spiritual master knows the nature of a particular man and what sort of duties he can perform in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he instructs him in that way. He instructs him through the ear, not privately, but publicly. “You are fit for such and such work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You can act in this way.” One person is advised to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by working in the Deities’ room, another is advised to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by performing editorial work, another is advised to do preaching work, and another is advised to carry out Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the cooking department. There are different departments of activity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and a spiritual master, knowing the particular ability of a particular man, trains him in such a way that by his tendency to act he becomes perfect. (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.22.7, purport).

«It is the duty of the spiritual master to teach how to decorate the Deity in the temple, how to cleanse the temple and how to worship the Deity.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.25.35).

«When the neophyte devotee accepts a pure devotee as his spiritual master, the duty of the spiritual master is to train the neophyte in the principles of regulated devotional service, or vaidhi-bhakti. At this stage the devotee’s service is based on his capacity to serve the Lord. The expert spiritual master engages his followers in work that will gradually develop their consciousness of service to the Lord. Therefore the preliminary stage of understanding prema, love of God, is to approach a proper pure devotee, accept him as one’s spiritual master, and execute regulated devotional service under his guidance» (Narada-bhakti-sutra, 2).

From the above quotes, let us understand more precisely how this role of a spiritual master manifests in practice:

1. a spiritual master determines a type and intensity of our practical service according to our spiritual level and our material nature;
2. a spiritual master determines a type and intensity of our sadhana according to our spiritual level and our material nature;
3. a spiritual master teaches practical skills to perform the angas of devotional service.

2. Spiritual maser teaches his disciple discipline and humility.

«It is very good that you want to become very learned in Krishna Consciousness, but what good is so much knowledge without practice? Obedience must be there, so by being submissive in this way and following the direction of the temple leaders is practicing the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness. Disciple means discipline. Without discipline there cannot be any spiritual progress. Therefore our system is to follow the authority or our superiors, no that we can independently question, not this is right and this is wrong. That is not the way. So my best advice to you is that without questioning you follow the instructions given to you by Visnujana and other leaders, and do exactly as they say, then everything will be all right.» (SPL to Sankarasana, 23 July, 1972).

«Prahāda Mahārāja also says the same thing, guru-śuśrūṣayā. Guru means heavy, or superior. So you can satisfy superior by your service, not by challenging. That is not possible. Guru-śuśrūṣayā. Guru-śuśrūṣayā bhaktyā» (Lecture, 12 September 1971).

«One must accept the bona fide spiritual master and render service unto him with great devotion and faith...

Purport: ... The words guru-śuśrūṣayā mean that one should personally serve the spiritual master by giving him bodily comforts, helping him in bathing, dressing, sleeping, eating and so on. This is called guru-śuśrūṣaṇam. A disciple should serve the spiritual master as a menial servant.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 7.7.30).

«if one wants to learn the meaning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, one must take lessons from a realized soul. One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books. One must become a servant of a Vaiṣṇava. As Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has confirmed, chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra peyeche kebā: one cannot be in a transcendental position unless one very faithfully serves a pure Vaiṣṇava. One must accept a Vaiṣṇava guru (āḍau gurv-āśrayam), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is. That is called the paramparā system». (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Antya-lila, 7.53, purport).

This role of a spiritual master manifests as follows:

1. a spiritual master gives instructions;
2. a spiritual master authorizes some of our actions;
3. a spiritual master enables his disciple to unselfishly serve another person, i.e., personal service to the master himself as well as service to his mission;
4. a spiritual master enables a disciple to practice humble hearing and questioning, and to act despite his or her own selfish desires.
5. a spiritual master observes a disciple's life and corrects their mistakes, as well as advises them against the consequences of their actions.

3. A spiritual master helps solve the problems of the material world.

«All Vedic literatures advise us to approach a bona fide spiritual master to get free from the perplexities of life, which happen without our desire. They are like a forest fire that somehow blazes without being set by anyone. Similarly, the world situation is such that perplexities of life automatically appear, without our wanting such confusion. No one wants fire, and yet it takes place, and we become perplexed. The Vedic wisdom therefore advises that in order to solve the perplexities of life and to understand the science of the solution, one must approach a spiritual master who is in the disciplic succession.» (Bhagavad-gita, 2.7, purport).

«As you know the standard of living of Americans and Europeans is different from our standard, it is better if we can accommodate them little comfortably. In that sense commode will be convenient for them. Otherwise, my students are so nicely trained that they can even lie down

on the street. But it is my duty to see to their comforts as far as possible. So please let me know if such house is available.» (SPL to Radha Raman, 25th June, 1970).

How it can manifest:

1. a spiritual master brings a disciple's attention to the cause of all material problems, and so enables them to direct their energy to eliminate the cause of the problems, not just their consequences;
2. a spiritual master helps to analyse the problems in a disciple's life and to make the right conclusions to help them in the development of Krishna consciousness;
3. a spiritual master helps to solve regular problems through the lens of Krishna consciousness;
4. a spiritual master organizes (not necessarily himself but initiates and supports the process) to support a devotee at the level of bodily and emotional needs in the socium.

4. Spiritual master dispels his disciple's doubts and strengthens their faith.

«One must become a servant of a Vaiṣṇava. As Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has confirmed, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra peyeche kebā*: one cannot be in a transcendental position unless one very faithfully serves a pure Vaiṣṇava. One must accept a Vaiṣṇava guru (*āḍau gurv-āśrayam*), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is. That is called the paramparā system.» (Chaitanya-caritamrita, Antya-lila, 7.53, purport).

«First one should hear the instructions of a qualified representative of the Paramātmā and take the words of such a spiritual master into one's heart by offering him humble service and striving in all ways to please him. One should then ponder the divine message of the spiritual master continuously, with the aim of dispelling all one's doubts and misconceptions. Then one can proceed to meditate on the Supreme Lord's lotus feet with total conviction and determination.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 10.87.23).

«Yet even in His liberated position, He referred everything to His spiritual master whenever there were doubts. Thus in any condition, even when liberated, we should never think ourselves independent of the spiritual master, but must refer to him as soon as there is some doubt regarding our progressive spiritual life.» (Chaitanya-charitamrta, Adi-lila 7.80).

How it can manifest:

1. a spiritual master answers his disciple's questions;
2. being aware of possible difficulties in his disciple's life, a spiritual master acts proactively and prevents any doubts with his instructions;

5. A spiritual master gives initiation

«The spiritual master is also called *ācārya*, or a transcendental professor of spiritual science. The *Manu-saṁhitā* (2.140) explains the duties of an *ācārya*, describing that a bona fide

spiritual master accepts charge of disciples, teaches them the Vedic knowledge with all its intricacies, and gives them their second birth. The ceremony performed to initiate a disciple into the study of spiritual science is called upanīti, or the function that brings one nearer to the spiritual master. One who cannot be brought nearer to a spiritual master cannot have a sacred thread, and thus he is indicated to be a śūdra. The sacred thread on the body of a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya or vaiśya is a symbol of initiation by the spiritual master; it is worth nothing if worn merely to boast of high parentage. The duty of the spiritual master is to initiate a disciple with the sacred thread ceremony, and after this saṁskāra, or purificatory process, the spiritual master actually begins to teach the disciple about the Vedas.» (Chaitanya-charitamṛta, Adi-līla, 1.46).

You may hold a fire yajna and chant on their beads and impress on them they are taking vows before Radha-Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master and the Vaisnavas. They must always chant at least 16 rounds daily and avoid the four sinful activities. (SPL to Jayatirtha, 18 June 1974).

How it can manifest:

Here it is worth understanding that initiation is one manifestation of a spiritual master's general duties, which may also work outside the ceremony of initiation.

1. a spiritual master accepts a disciple's vows, and helps his disciple to feel responsible for adhering to them;
2. a spiritual master takes responsibility for his disciple's life, so he helps them develop responsibility to their spiritual master and stay connected to the Lord's family;
3. a spiritual master creates positive spiritual samskaras in his disciple's life (i.e., during initiation, he conducts pancha samskaras).

6. A spiritual teacher moulds the character and behavior of his disciple.

Education means how to make one brāhmaṇa, how to teach him how he become sense controlled, śama, dama, mind control, how to become truthful, how to become clean, how to become simple, how to become full of knowledge, how to apply knowledge in practical life, how to know God. This is education. This is education. (Lecture 3 august 1975).

«Although Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master of the entire universe, He nevertheless took the position of a disciple in order to teach by example how a devotee should strictly follow the orders of a spiritual master in executing the duty of always chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.» (Chaitanya-charitamṛta, Adi-līla, 7.72).

See also quotes from the principles of spirituality, practicality and permanence of education.

How it can manifest:

1. a spiritual master provides a living example of behaviour in various situations by living

communication;

2. a spiritual master explains the application of the Scriptures in life, based on his deeper experience.

7. A spiritual master maintains his disciple's enthusiasm.

«My spiritual master took this risk, preaching work, and he inspired us also to do that preaching work. And we are also imploring you to take this preaching work» (Lecture on SB 1.5.8-9, May 24, 1969.).

«Our leaders shall be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service, which is individual and spontaneous and voluntary. They should try always to generate some atmosphere of fresh challenge to the devotees, so that they will agree enthusiastically to rise and meet it. That is the art of management: to draw out spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Krishna.» (SPL to Karandhara, 22 December, 1972)

«Girirāja: The program was very rigorous, because it was bitterly cold at night and we were expected to get up at four o'clock in the morning and bathe and attend maṅgala-ārati. So a few staunch devotees like Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Haṁsadūta got up early – by three or three-thirty – and walked all the way from our camp to the Ganges to take an early-morning bath. But those of us staying in the brahmacārī tent were not so staunch, and generally when it was time to get up at four o'clock it was so cold out that we preferred to remain in our sleeping bags. Śrīla Prabhupāda also started to notice that some of us were coming late to maṅgala-ārati and that some of us were not coming at all. Prabhupāda became very upset about this, because he knew how important maṅgala-ārati was for us. So one morning, although he was a little frail in health, he got up at four o'clock and came out in his gamchā, sat down under the pump, and took that ice-cold bath early in the morning – just to encourage us to get up, bathe, and come to maṅgala-ārati. That had a very profound effect on all of us, and we felt so ashamed that we just couldn't sleep late anymore» (Prabhupada-lilamṛta, chapter 33).

«Krishna Consciousness Movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action, not for making bureaucracy.» (SPL to Karandhara, 22 December, 1972)

How it can manifest:

1. a spiritual master is a living example of a person who gains enthusiasm from Krishna consciousness;
2. a spiritual master shares his inspiration through lectures, kirtans, etc.;
3. a spiritual master creates an atmosphere of healthy "challenge" that encourages disciples to invest their strength in Krishna consciousness;
4. a spiritual master encourages mindfulness, independent thinking, and working with motivations.

If we try to summarize all the points into one list of devotees' needs in the spiritual life, where a spiritual master helps a disciple, we would end up with something like this:

1. an opportunity to consult a disciple on engagement in the service to the Lord (both in terms of their sadhana and mission);
2. an opportunity to be in an atmosphere of enthusiasm to serve Krishna, an "inspiring challenge" to service, independent thinking, and mindfulness;
3. an opportunity to learn in life practice; to hear explanations how to apply the Scriptures into life in various circumstances;
4. an opportunity to observe a living example of Krishna consciousness behaviour in different situations;
5. an opportunity not only to hear but also to ask questions, to clarify any points;
6. an opportunity to get deep spiritual samskaras that would remain in memory and help to develop in Krishna Consciousness;
7. an opportunity to be "under supervision" and to receive corrections and warnings about one's behaviours, to be responsible for one's actions to another person;
8. an opportunity to develop obedience through discipline, receiving and following instructions, humble questioning, and accepting someone's authority;
9. . an opportunity to practice a personal relationship of service to someone as a representative of God;
10. . an opportunity to seek support from someone in a difficult situation or when enthusiasm is low; an opportunity to go for physical, social, or emotional help.

The author has tried to limit the needs to ten points to make them easy to understand, but a thoughtful reader can use the expanded list from the description above.

It is also important to understand here that these are the needs of a disciple, and a spiritual master bestows his mercy by allowing a disciple to "fulfill" these needs. On the other hand, this list makes responsibility of those who care for spiritual growth of other devotees to be as specific as possible. Responsibility is often watered down behind the ultimate goal of "bringing people to Krishna," because it becomes unclear whether or not a devotee brings his mentees to Krishna. So, this list can help answer important questions of living leadership: what the responsibility of the one who provides this guidance is, what responsibilities they have to their mentees and to the community at large.

Guru Tattva in ISKCON



Now after discussing the question of what we are responsible for in caring for others, it is worth addressing another important question – who takes that responsibility? To answer this question, first we must understand the principle of guru-tattva. Lord Krishna has many forms, yet He is one. Also, the Lord appears to a devotee as a guru, so a spiritual master is the Lord's direct representative. The Lord can also appear as various spiritual masters, and if they all teach what the Lord said, they are "one" in the sense of the unity of their message. Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda's wonderful explanation of guru-tattva

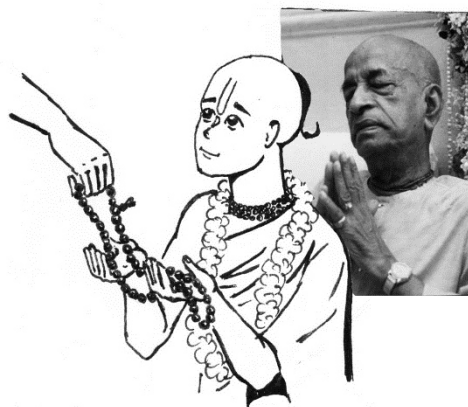
«It is Vedic injunction. Somebody was asking whether guru is absolutely necessary. Yes, absolutely necessary. That is the Vedic injunction. The Vedas say, tad-vijnanartham. Tad-vijnana means spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge; for acquiring spiritual knowledge. Tad-vijnanartham. Sa—one; gurum eva—eva means must; gurum—to a guru. Must go to guru. Not "a" guru; "the" guru. Guru is one. Because as it is explained by our Revatinandana Maharaja, guru is coming from the disciplic succession. What five thousand years ago Vyasadeva instructed or Krsna instructed, the same thing we are also instructing. Therefore there is no difference between instruction. Therefore guru is one. Although hundreds and thousands of acaryas have come and gone, but the message is one. Therefore guru cannot be two. Real guru will not talk differently. Some guru says that "In my opinion, you should like this," and some guru will say, "In my opinion you'll do this"—they are not guru; they are all rascals. Guru has no "own" opinion. Guru has got only one opinion, the same opinion which was expressed by Krsna, Vyasadeva or Narada or Arjuna or Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu or the Gosvamis. You'll find the same thing. Five thousand years ago, Lord Sri Krsna spoke Bhagavad-gita and Vyasadeva wrote it, recorded it. Vyasadeva does not say that "It is my opinion." Vyasadeva writes, sri bhagavan uvaca: "Whatever writing, it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead." He's not giving his own opinion. Sri bhagavan uvaca. Therefore he is guru. He is not misinterpreting the words of Krsna. He's giving as it is. Just like a bearer, peon. Somebody has written you letter, the peon has got the letter. It does not mean he has to correct it or edit it or addition or... No. He'll present it. That is his duty. Then he is guru. He's honest. Similarly, guru cannot be two. Mind that. The person may be different, but the message is the same. Therefore guru is one. The Vedic instruction is, tad vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet [MU 1.2.12]. Gurum eva, "one must." Eva means "must." Abhigacchet, this verb is used when there is the sense of "must." It never says "Go to a guru," but he says "Must approach the guru." Guru is one. Guru cannot be two. Gurum evabhigacchet. And we see also, practically, in the disciplic succession of guru, the same thing is spoken by the guru. Same thing. Repetition of the same subject matter, no other. Krsna said that man-mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yaji mam namaskuru: [Bg. 18.65] "Just think of Me," man-mana. "Just become devotee of Me," man-mana bhava mad-bhakto. "Just worship Me and just offer your obeisances unto Me." Sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja [Bg. 18.66]. "Just surrender unto Me." You'll find this instruction in the Bhagavad-gita. The same thing was spoken by all the acaryas. Ramanujacarya also says the same, Madhvacarya says the same thing, Caitanya Mahaprabhu

says same thing, the Gosvamis say the same thing, and we are also speaking the same thing. There is no difference. We do not interpret the words of Krsna, that "In my opinion, Kurukshetra means this body." This is rascaldom. The whole situation has been spoiled by these so-called rascal gurus who gives his own opinion» (Lecture, 22 August, 1973).

This is an external but extremely important fundamental understanding, which essence we must understand: a guru is not a person, a guru is a principle of spiritual knowledge of the parampara, which is presented to us precisely through a living person or persons.

In our society, spiritual masters act as servants and representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda, so the essence of their service is to strengthen the relationship of devotees with Śrīla Prabhupāda

«Those who accept the service of diksha guru or siksha guru in ISKCON are required to be exemplary in representing Śrīla Prabhupāda's teaching in their words and personal behavior. The siksha guru gives spiritual instruction and inspiration on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupada and our Guru Parampara. The diksha guru gives spiritual instruction, inspiration, formal initiation, a spiritual name, and later imparts the sacred Gayatri mantras to a qualified disciple as a service to Śrīla Prabhupada and our Guru Parampara.» (GBC Statement on Śrīla Prabhupāda's Preeminent Position, 9 March 2013).



That is, for ISKCON devotees a guru is the principle of transmitting Śrīla Prabhupāda's spirit and mission, manifested through various personalities, while Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the Founder Acharya of ISKCON, remains the primary siksha guru of all devotees of this society. Thus, Śrīla Prabhupāda delegates the authority to take care of his followers to GBC council, which, along with the authority, has the responsibility to provide full care for the above needs of diverse forthcoming members of the society. And GBC council delegates care for diverse devotees to appropriate people: initiating spiritual masters, GBC regional representatives, etc., each of them carries the role of a guru if they represent Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is important to note the difference from the classic model described in the Scriptures. In the classic system, a spiritual master took full responsibility for his disciple's care, and therefore his role was paramount in his disciple's life, and he represented the relationship with the parampara. The attempt to copy this approach in ISKCON creates considerable anxiety as it is structured by Śrīla Prabhupāda following Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, and it is quite different from the classic model of maths structured around one acharya. This classic understanding is inapplicable in ISKCON precisely because the head of the society is not a single living individual but a collective body, while the others play the role of the followers, and in the complex structure of our society it further distributes the functions of spiritual care for devotees accordingly. Therefore, it must be understood that the responsibility of care for devotees in ISKCON society is

entrusted to various leaders. And a local GBC representative is no less responsible to Śrīla Prabhupāda for a devotee in their region than a dīkshā guru of that devotee.

«The GBC should all be the instructor gurus. I am in the initiator guru, and you should be the instructor guru by teaching what I am teaching and doing what I am doing. This is not a title, but you must actually come to this platform. This I want.» (SPL to Madhudvisa, 4 August, 1975).

«The formula for ISKCON organization is very simple and can be understood by everyone. The world is divided into twelve zones. For each zone there is one zonal secretary appointed by Śrīla Prabhupada. The zonal secretaries duty is to see that the spiritual principles are being upheld very nicely in all the Temples of his zone.» (Letter to All Temple Presidents, signed by Śrīla Prabhupada and Karandhara Das, 22 April, 1972.).

«All the presidents of our centers should see that all the members are strictly observing the brahminical standards, such as rising early, cleansing at least twice daily, reading profusely, attending arati.» (SPL to Rupanuga, 3 May, 1972.).

This is how the two lines of leadership in ISKCON emerge, and GBC board compiled a document to harmonize these two lines in our society; it can be found in the appendices of this book. We should understand that the models for these relationships may vary and may change over time but the principle of complete living guidance to ISKCON devotees from Śrīla Prabhupāda's family and his various authorized representatives remains the same.

At the same time, a shared responsibility should not make one feel that in the end no one is responsible. ISKCON is a family in which the "children" in the guise of aspiring Vaishnavas have parents, and uncles, and aunts, and grandparents; they are not orphanages with no parents or other relatives. It is an interesting sociological fact that if a person becomes extremely unwell on a crowded street, their chance to survive is less than if they were in a similar situation on the street with just one passer-by. Because on a busy street every passer-by would hope that someone else would take care of that person, while a single passer-by would feel the whole weight of responsibility on themselves. It is important for us not to fall into this mindset and hope on others, and to understand who is responsible for what in ISKCON. But at the same time, we need to understand that GBC board are the paramount persons whom Śrīla Prabhupāda made responsible for the development of ISKCON as a whole and for provision of assistance to of each of its followers' development.

It is important to realise that a diksha guru or GBC council representative de jure entrusted with responsibility for his subjects may not always be available for a devotee in need, especially in the realities of modern society; so, they need assistants to care for those who have been entrusted to their protection. Thus, a need arises for siksha gurus who can play this role:

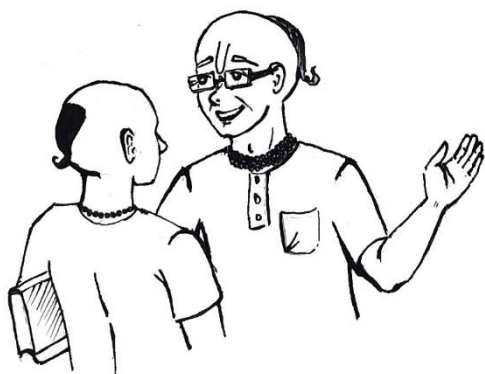
«Sometimes a dīkshā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the śikṣā-guru.» (Lecture on Bg, 17.1–3, 4 July 1974).

«That is the way of Indian teaching, that there is one teacher, and how he's managing hundreds? That means there are groups. One who is seniorly student, he's taking some beginners: "Write a or A like this." That he can teach. What he has learned, he can teach... Intelligence is that employ others to help you. That is intelligence. Not that "Oh, I was busy, I could not do it." Why? What about your assistant? Train assistant so that in your absence things can be done. ... Everyone should be teacher and student....» (Room Conversation, 31 July, 1976)

«Yes, a shiksha guru is anyone who can give spiritual advancement. You take instruction from my books, and if you are unable to understand any portion of the books, then you can get it explained by any senior devotee, whether Madhukanta or anyone else. Any senior devotee can be an instructor in spiritual subject matters.» (SPL to Satadari, 7 July, 1974)

As a result, it can be said that the duty of the leaders at the appropriate level is to make sure that each devotee receives quality care according to their present needs within their sphere of influence and responsibility. That is, the principle of guru-tattva must be manifested – a variety of personalities who represent Śrīla Prabhupāda to a devotee are necessary. In the context of ISKCON's complex socium the duties of living leadership can be distributed among different devotees through this principle. But the most important thing is that each devotee should have complete living guidance, that is, an opportunity to meet the needs in the community of devotees listed in the previous subsection.

Introduction of the term "mentor"



Before examining this aspect of guru-tattva let us first give an analogy with another example which is usually easier for devotees to understand. “Bhagavad-gītā” 5.18, tells us, “The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brāhmaṇa, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].” A living being conditioned by duality cannot understand this instruction. From the material point of view, there is indeed a difference, but there is none from the

spiritual point of view, because there is a soul in each body. However, from the perspective of material difference, even a person who has a correct spiritual vision described in this verse will not behave in the same way with a brahmana and a tiger. Although seeing them as equal, they will consider material nature, when interacting with different living beings and will not attempt to embrace a tiger. That is how spiritual unity and material diversity exist.

Let us now proceed to an understanding of the role of siksha in our society. The Scriptures describe the position of a guru as extremely exalted:

«Although others give help in showing the way to beginners, the guru who first initiates one with the mahā-mantra is to be known as the initiator, and the saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are called instructing spiritual masters. The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 1.34, purport).

We cannot simply disregard the instruction that a siksha-guru and a diksha-guru should be seen as equal and non-different manifestations of Krishna. Sometimes devotees, especially beginners, treat only a diksha-guru with great respect, while seeing siksha-guru as ordinary people in their lives. On the other hand, it is also important to understand this statement correctly; despite the oneness of the position, there is a certain difference between the two, and it can create a different etiquette of behaviour. A deviation in behaviour toward a siksha guru, either one way or the other, can have consequences similar in severity to an attempt to hug a hungry tiger.

Indeed, a living being must learn to see different Vaishnavas as representatives of the Lord and to address them with profound respect:

«In the beginning of that book he has offered his obeisances to his different gurus, and it is to be noted that he has adored them all equally. The first spiritual master mentioned is Cintāmaṇi, who was one of his instructing spiritual masters because she first showed him the spiritual path. Cintāmaṇi was a prostitute with whom Bilvamaṅgala was intimate earlier in his life. She gave him the inspiration to begin on the path of devotional service, and because she convinced him to give up material existence to try for perfection by loving Kṛṣṇa, he has first offered his respects to her. Next he offers his respects to his initiating spiritual master, Somagiri, and then to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who was also his instructing spiritual master.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 1.57).

«To answer your last point, one who teaches can be treated as Spiritual Master. It is not that after we become initiated we become perfect. No. It requires teaching. So if we take instruction from them, all senior godbrothers may be treated as guru, there is no harm. Actually, you have only one Spiritual Master, who initiates you, just as you have only one father. But every Vaisnava should be treated as prabhu, master, higher than me, and in this sense, if I learn from him, he may be regarded as guru. It is not that I disobey my real Spiritual Master and call someone else as Spiritual Master. That is wrong. It is only that I can call Spiritual Master someone who is teaching me purely what my initiating Spiritual Master has taught. Do you get the sense?» (SPL to Sri Galim, 20 November, 1971).

Thus, a kanishtha-adhikari who gives respect only to the Lord, the Deities, and one's diksha-guru must rise to the level of a madhyama-adhikari and learn to see the manifestations of the Lord in a wider audience of Vaishnavas and treat them with appropriate respect. In this way one will be able to see that the status of a siksha-guru represents an extremely wide stratum of people:

«Yes, a shiksha guru is anyone who can give spiritual advancement.» (SPL to Satadari, 7 July, 1974).

«Hearing Mukunda dāsa give this proper decision, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu confirmed it, saying, “Yes, it is correct. One who awakens devotion to Kṛṣṇa is certainly the spiritual master.”» (“Chaitanya-charitamṛta”, Madhya-lila, 15.117).

«The word guru refers to one who gives proper direction under the authority of the Vedic injunctions and according to the examples of the lives of great personalities.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.21.28-29).

One may find it difficult to understand why Bilvamangala Thakur gives the prostitute Chintamani the same respect as the Supreme Lord Himself, but siksha gurus are not only devotees who “do not touch the ground”. Siksha gurus are all those Vaishnavas who in one way or another help us in our spiritual growth. In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in Chaitanya Charitamrita, Adi Lila, 1.47 that there are two kinds of siksha guru:

«There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple’s spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions. Thus the instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective and subjective ways of understanding.» (Chaitanya-caritamṛta, Adi-lila 1.47).

As a representative of either type of siksha guru, for us he should be a representative of the Lord at the moment when he actually teaches us what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught. And so, he deserves appropriate respect; it is not important for him, but it is for us because it is an opportunity to meet our own needs for spiritual growth from the above list. However, the etiquette of the relationship with the second kind of siksha guru may differ from that with the first kind of siksha guru (liberated personalities) because the second kind of siksha guru may not always be completely free of anarthas in his heart and therefore may misuse received respect and may not always give correct knowledge, that is, sometimes not act as a siksha guru, not to represent guru-tattva.

On the other hand, when a diksha guru (in this case we consider him in terms of being the main siksha guru) is not around, a disciple is left with no standard against which they can reconcile various types of siksha they receive from different devotees. As a result, a disciple is left alone with their mind to choose and interpret instructions from various sources that pleases their still impure minds, and not necessarily to result in spiritual goodness. And therefore, to protect a devotee from such a situation is one aspect of spiritual care.

Therefore, in many places of ISKCON the term "mentor" is introduced, which means a main siksha-guru of the second kind. On the one hand, not to mistake two kinds of siksha-gurus and, on the other hand, to determine the main or a main one (in the absence of a diksha-guru) among siksha-gurus of the second kind, who are devotees to give instructions in daily practice. That is, a not yet

fully liberated individual who assists their mentee in daily spiritual practice by spiritual guidance and whose guidance is usually verified by other kinds of guidance from other devotees. This book does not claim to assess the correctness of the term but we merely attempt to explain why the term is commonly introduced and what it actually means.

It is important to understand that a mentor receives an authority to serve from other Vaishnavas, that is, a mentee is entrusted to his care just as a young child is sometimes entrusted to the care of an older child by their parents.

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

Who gives and what authority one receives depends on the structure of a community in a particular area, but the very fact of appropriate authorization from the seniors for this service is necessary, and it must consider both lines of leadership in ISKCON.

In this book we will not attempt to go into details of the relationship between representatives of siksha, diksha, and organization, since this issue the author hopes that a GBC resolution on the subject will eventually come forth about this matter. But a part of this topic has been already addressed in the document Harmonizing Lines of Authority.

Qualifications of Living Guidance



In this section we should talk about two concepts - a qualification to receive living guidance and a qualification to give it. First, let us talk briefly about the first of the two, since it has been addressed in more detail in the principle of systematicity.

In fact, a devotee is under someone else's guidance from the very first days in the movement in terms that some of the duties listed above are performed by the Vaishnava society for such a novice seeker of truth from the very first seconds of their meeting with devotees. However, the full manifestation of this principle can be seen from the stage of bhajana-kriya. In that case, initiation must be a consequence of a devotee's willingness to receive complete living guidance in their life. Before that, we do not try to impose this guidance, initiation

itself is not given for any other reason; its consequence is voluntary and conscious devotion, that is, a devotee consciously and voluntarily renounces part of their freedom.

«So śiṣya means one who accepts the authority of the spiritual master. He voluntarily accepts the rulings or the punishment of the spiritual master. That is called śiṣya. One voluntarily agrees to the spiritual master... This initiation is going on. This is the beginning of voluntary acceptance of the spiritual master. That means he agrees that he will abide by the orders of the spiritual master. This is called acceptance of spiritual master. Śiṣya. śiṣya means voluntarily accepting the ruling. Everyone is free. If I give you some ruling, why should you accept it? Therefore this formal initiation ceremony is performed. He promises, "My dear sir, I shall abide by your order."» (Lecture, 23 March, 1969).

«One should not speak in such a way as to agitate the minds of others. Of course, when a teacher speaks, he can speak the truth for the instruction of his students, but such a teacher should not speak to those who are not his students if he will agitate their minds.» (Bhagavad-gita, 17.15).

«Mahārāja Parīkṣit is a typical disciple because he is perfectly inquisitive. If one is not very inquisitive about self-realization, one need not approach a spiritual master simply to make a show of discipleship.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.8.34).

«These boys, these girls, gradually they came. First of all they were hearing; then they came forward, "Please make me your disciple." That means, "Under your direction my bhajana-kriyā will go." This is called bhajana-kriyā, under the direction of the spiritual master.» (Lecture, 30 March, 1974).

Until one is ready to receive complete guidance in one's life, one is cared for according to their level of shraddha or sadhu-sanga.

When it comes to the qualifications to give living guidance, it is obvious that spiritually immature people who accepted the status of a mentor, a teacher, or other devotee engaged in spiritual care prematurely may overuse their position, exceed their authority, exploit others, and ultimately destroy weak sprouts of faith in people's hearts. In this case, their status will obstruct the spiritual development of both, themselves, and their mentees. Even just wrong, inappropriate advice can do great harm to a mentee. Understanding the seriousness of our responsibility, we cannot afford to experiment on people and their spiritual lives. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself repeatedly warned his disciples not to become spiritual teachers prematurely:

«Anyone, if he is a pure devotee he can deliver others, he can become spiritual master. But unless he is on that platform he should not attempt it. Then both of them will go to hell, like blind men leading the blind.» (SPL to Tusta Krsna, 14 December, 1972)

Therefore, it is obvious that a system of spiritual care only works properly when there are precise requirements to perform this service and a well-established system to educate mentors is in place. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself also often spoke of spiritual degrees, and the Bhaktivedanta degree in particular as a prerequisite for one to perform the service of an initiating spiritual master:

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

However, we can see from this quote as well as from the others presented above in this section that Śrīla Prabhupāda recognized the importance to involve every devotee in the process of caring for others. He also suggested that it could be achieved by organizing the system in the manner of Indian schools. Therefore, the responsibility for a mentee could be distributed among different levels of devotees, where each could play an appropriate role according to his or her qualifications.

The culture of a modern broad society undoubtedly evaluates qualifications of teachers and educators: there are various systems of training and requalifying teachers, classification of figures of education and science by categories and degrees. However, a global society evaluates those who provide education purely based on academic knowledge and the ability to deliver it to students.

«The brāhmaṇas are traditionally intelligent men, and thus they will be able to pick up modern education to the topmost rank, but as far as moral and religious principles are concerned, they shall be the most fallen. Education and bad character go ill together, but such things will run parallel. The administrative heads as a class will condemn the tenets of Vedic wisdom and will prefer to conduct a so-called secular state, and the so-called educated brāhmaṇas will be purchased by such unscrupulous administrators. ... The brāhmaṇas are specifically restricted from accepting such service. But in this age they will not only accept service, but they will do so even if it is of the meanest quality» («Шримад Бхагаватам», 1.16.21).

«In the modern system of education the teacher's academic qualification is taken into consideration without evaluation of his moral life. Therefore, the result of education is misuse of high intelligence in so many ways» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.9.26).

For the ISKCON community it is important not to fall into a similar trap and judge the qualifications of those who would give living guidance by defining qualification as something that is not, or, conversely, to neglect other important requirements by focusing only on a portion of the aspects.

In general, the level of the qualification of a devotee should be based on the degree to which one meets the definition of a guru as given in Srimad Bhagavatam, 11.3.21:

«Therefore any person who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the bona fide guru is that he has realized the conclusions of the Scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, should be understood to be bona fide spiritual masters».

In essence, this verse speaks of three essential characteristics of the qualifications of the one who provides spiritual care for others: knowledge of shastras, level of spiritual practice, and conduct. When projected onto different aspects of a Vaishnava's life, these three qualifications will generate many criteria. To possess of one or another criterion or a combination of them is essential to one's ability to carry out one or another responsibility of living leadership. Since ISKCON is dynamic, a required minimum qualification may vary according to time, place, and circumstances.

Principle of selflessness in spiritual leadership

Generally speaking, devotees who provide living guidance to other devotees in any role need to observe the principle of selflessness in all its aspects. We may have a few false motives - desires for honour, fame, pleasure or financial gain, attempts at self-realization and self-assertion, envy, etc. One who gives spiritual care to others needs to be guided in this matter and meditate on Śrīla Prabhupāda's example of pure motives; we will provide a few examples:

«I am very much thankful for your nice appreciative letter of my activities in this country and my Krishna bless you for all the fine sentiments that you have by the grace of the Lord. Practically there is no credit for me, if there is any credit it goes to my Spiritual Master, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Prabhupada, Who is helping me by sending so many good souls like you in this movement. Whatever is being done, it is due to His Divine Grace only. So my business is just to carry out His order. That is the way of disciplic succession; and as you have all come to help me, if you also follow the same principles then our combined effort to serve Lord Krishna will be surely successful.» (SPL to Dayananda, 26 March, 1969).

«Although officially I am your Spiritual Master, I consider you all students as my Spiritual Master because your love for Krishna and service for Krishna teach me how to become a sincere Krishna Conscious person.» (SPL to Jadurani, 16 December, 1967).

«Therefore I may be in designation your Spiritual Master, but actually I am servant of the servant of Krishna, and because you are all sincere servants of Krishna, I am your servant.» (SPL to Brahmanaanda, 15 February, 1968.).

«Lord Caitanya said that His spiritual master told Him: "It is very good that You have attained such a perfectional stage of love of Godhead. Because of Your attainment, I am very much obliged to You." The father becomes enlivened when he sees his son advance beyond himself.

Similarly, the spiritual master takes more pleasure in seeing his disciple advance than in advancing himself.» (Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, chapter 19).

However, the principle of selflessness also has the same value for those who receive living leadership.

«A servant who desires material profits from his master is certainly not a qualified servant or pure devotee. Similarly, a master who bestows benedictions upon his servant because of a desire to maintain a prestigious position as master is also not a pure master.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.10.5).

On the part of a disciple, such selflessness manifests itself in the fact that, first, one receives this guidance not for one's own benefit but to serve Krishna and, second, one also serves one's spiritual master.

«A devoted disciple of the spiritual master would rather die with the spiritual master than fail to execute the spiritual master's mission. As the Supreme Personality of Godhead comes down upon this earth to reestablish the principles of religion, so His representative, the spiritual master, also comes to reestablish religious principles. It is the duty of the disciples to take charge of the mission of the spiritual master and execute it properly. Otherwise the disciple should decide to die along with the spiritual master. In other words, to execute the will of the spiritual master, the disciple should be prepared to lay down his life and abandon all personal considerations.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.28.50).

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in The Nectar of Instruction (verse 4) speaks of the six selfless exchanges between devotees: “Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one’s mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, accepting prasāda and offering prasāda are the six symptoms of love shared by one devotee and another.” Devotees must learn the science of selfless offering, as well as the science of selfless acceptance. This kind of relationship, when both a teacher and a disciple serve each other selflessly, may look like a relationship when each party tries to gain something but in fact it is the exact opposite.

«And the brahmanaa will distribute knowledge freely, and the ksatriya will give protection to the brahmanaa. This is the system of Vedic system. Even in fifty years ago, education in India, there was no charges. A learned brahmanaa will sit down in corner of a neighborhood and all the children will come there. They will learn primary education. And the parents of the children will send, somebody will send rice, somebody will send dal... Just like we are maintaining, by collecting. Not here, but in Bombay, our center is collecting and distributing. The whole system was that. Love exchange. I give you some service; you give me something, out of your love. Dadati pratigrhnati. Love means six symptoms. I give you something, you give me something. I give you something for eating, you also give me something for eating» (Lecture, 22 June, 1972).

Let us demonstrate a proper approach to such a relationship through an example of finances. This is how Śrīla Prabhupāda himself describes his vision in his commentary on the above verse of The Nectar of Instruction:

«The International Society for Krishna Consciousness has been established to facilitate these six kinds of loving exchanges between devotees. This Society was started single-handedly, but because people are coming forward and dealing with the give-and-take policy, the Society is now expanding all over the world. We are glad that people are donating very liberally to the development of the Society's activities, and people are also eagerly accepting whatever humble contribution we are giving them in the shape of books and magazines dealing strictly with the subject matter of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» (The Nectar of Instruction, verse 4, commentary).

In addition, to better understand the principle of selflessness in the aspect of the culture of relationships let us describe different aspects of a selfless financial culture on the part of the givers and receivers of spiritual knowledge.

Financial culture on the part of the givers of spiritual knowledge.

1. To provide education with pure motives, with the desire to give knowledge to others but not with the desire to make a profit.

«They are not brāhmaṇas. Those who give education in exchange of money, they are not brāhmaṇas. Just like we are lecturing, educated, educating people. We don't say that "Give us salary." We simply ask them, "Please come." Therefore we are making food. I'll give you food. I'll give you good seat. Please come and hear. We are not asking money, that "First of all pay the fees. Then you come and learn Bhagavad-gītā." We never say so. So those, these so-called teachers, they first of all set up salary, "What salary you'll give me?" That is dog's business. That is not brāhmaṇa's business. Brāhmaṇa will never ask. Brāhmaṇa is eager to give lesson only. That's all. Brāhmaṇa is eager to see that people are educated. "Take free education and be educated. Be a human being." This is brāhmaṇa's business. I came here not to ask for any money. But I want to give lesson. This is brāhmaṇa's business.» (Room Conversation, 11 June, 1974, Paris).

2. To make education available to all who desire it. This is the culture that Śrīla Prabhupāda tried to establish. Financial cost should not be an obstacle regarding this aspect of accessibility.

«In my opinion all Gurukula students should be educated free of charge, but outside students may be charged. Our own parents should without obligation contribute liberally, but we should not be hard with them if they cannot pay. Sometimes the parents get money from the Welfare Dept., so whatever money they get for their children must be paid to Gurukula.» (SPL to Mohanananda, 13 October, 1973).

«God has given him the ear, and he can learn. So there is no cost. There is no official cost. "How much does this course of study cost?" We don't charge anything.» (Lecture, 23 March 1969).

«Thus the highest knowledge was easily available even to the poorest man in society. The poorest man could inquire from an astrologer about his past, present and future, with no need for business agreements or exorbitant payments. The brāhmaṇa would give him all the benefit of his knowledge without asking remuneration, and the poor man, in return, would offer a handful of rice, or anything he had in his possession, to satisfy the brāhmaṇa. In a perfect human society, perfect knowledge in any science — medical, astrological, ecclesiastical and so on — is available even to the poorest man, with no anxiety over payment.» (Chaitanya Charitamrita, Adi-lila, 17.104).

3. If not to speak about spiritual knowledge, but generally about education in a healthy society, then trade (business in terms of varnashrama) is one of the roles of a Vaishya in a society. This is an extremely important role in the development of a healthy society, but business is based on trade, not on education. Education (both Vaishnava and ordinary education) should be based on a Brahmanical approach to finance.

«Vaiśyas should live by trade, agriculture, protection of cows.» (Lecture, 30 January, 1973).

«The brāhmaṇas should be learned; they should give instruction, advice. The kṣatriyas should give protection; the vaiśyas should produce, economic development;» (Press Conference, 2 October, 1975).

«Brāhmaṇas means they are teachers. ... So every temple should be educational center, and the brāhmaṇas should be engaged. They should be properly educated and they should teach others also. In this way, temple means education in spiritual life.» (Room Conversation, 22 August, 1976).

«One who is in a lower grade of social life cannot accept the profession of a higher class unless necessary.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.11, chapter overview).

4. Generally, Vaishnavas and especially those engaged in brahmanaical activities are to live a simple life.

«As an alternative, a brāhmaṇa may also take to the vaiśya's occupational duty of agriculture, cow protection, or trade. He may depend on that which he has received without begging, he may beg in the paddy field every day, he may collect paddy left in a field by its proprietor, or he may collect food grains left here and there in the shops of grain dealers. These are four means of livelihood that may also be adopted by brāhmaṇas. Among these four, each of them in succession is better than the one preceding it.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 7.11.16).

«Another feature of the devotee is nirīhayā, simple living. Nirīhā means “gentle,” “meek” or “simple.” A devotee should not live very gorgeously and imitate a materialistic person. Plain living and high thinking are recommended for a devotee. He should accept only so much as he needs to keep the material body fit for the execution of devotional service.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.22.24).

5. Financial selflessness or its absence does not manifest itself in an individual's income, but in the way one spends that income.

«Rūpa Gosvāmī advises that if one renounces anything which could be applied in the service of the Lord and does not use it for that purpose, that is called phalgu-vairāgya, insufficient or false renunciation. Everything belongs to the Supreme Personality of Godhead; therefore everything can be engaged in the service of the Lord; nothing should be used for one's sense gratification. That is real renunciation.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.31.47).

6. To protect devotees who give and receive spiritual knowledge Vaishnava teachers and organizers of educational projects, who receive income from their activities, must be accountable to the seniors authorized to supervise such service in regards of their finances.

Financial culture on the part of those who receive spiritual knowledge.

On the other hand, it is necessary to consider the following factors:

1. A disciple will gain more benefit if they donate something to their teacher. And to please their spiritual master is their duty.

«Then They offered to serve Their teacher by awarding him anything he desired. This offering by the student to the teacher or spiritual master is called guru-dakṣiṇā. It is essential that a student satisfy the teacher in return for any learning received, either material or spiritual.» (Kṛṣṇa Recovers the Son of His Teacher, chapter 45).

2. A society should protect brahmanical people and provide them with everything they need, since it is the existence of brahmanas in the society that makes the institution of varnashrama possible.

«A brāhmaṇa is always independent because he is a teacher, spiritual master and advisor to society. The members of society provide him with all the necessities of life.» (Chaitanya Charitamrita, Adi-lila 13.82, purport).

«In the glorious days, or before the advent of the Age of Kali, the brāhmaṇas, the cows, the women, the children and the old men were properly given protection. The protection of the brāhmaṇas maintains the institution of varṇa and āśrama, the most scientific culture for attainment of spiritual life» (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.8.5 purport).

3. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted devotees, especially grihasthas, to actively donate some of their income to spread Krishna Consciousness. He even made an obligatory donation to all the members of the League of Devotees, the society he organized in India before ISKCON:

«The next item is charity. Charity is meant for the householders. The householders should earn a livelihood by an honorable means and spend fifty percent of their income to propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. Thus a householder should give in charity to institutional societies that are engaged in that way.» (Bhagavad-gita, 16.1-3, purport).

«Now, that is sacrifice. They sacrificed their labor for the spiritual master, for the teacher, and whatever they got, they surrendered to the teacher. And it is said that after cooking, if the teacher asked the student, "My dear boy, you come and take your meals," then he will take. Otherwise, if the teacher forgets to call him one day for his meals, then he should not go and ask the teacher that "Sir, I have not taken my food. Give me my food." Rather, he should starve. So much penances, so much regulative[?] was there. These are called sacrifice. ... Similarly, the family life, those who are... Yajna-dana. Dana means charity. A grhastha, those who are living in family life with wife and children, they are expected to give in charity as much as possible. That is also service.» (Lecture, 12 August, 1966).

From a letter of requirements for members of the League of Devotees, January 1, 1955:

«(4) the inner member shall not indulge in unnecessary indoor or outdoor games, sporting or gambling habit. The nominal boarding charges is Rs 25/-. No charges for lodging.

(5) the inner member must enroll himself as regular member in the A. B. or C. Category. Members with voting power will have to pay the scheduled monthly subscriptions The lowest rate of subscription is Rs 10/- per month. Any one unable to pay the membership fee may apply for free membership or lesser subscription for consideration of the Board of Executive members. The executive committee can decide on it.».

4. Śrīla Prabhupāda also wanted grihasthas to take responsibility for their duties. For example, when parents were not prepared to provide education in gurukula with everything they needed, Śrīla Prabhupāda responded as follows:

«Neither the sannyasis or brahmacaris can be expected to support Gurukula. The parents must take responsibility for their children, otherwise they should not have children. It is the duty of the individual parents. I am not in favor of taxing the Temples» (SPL to Jayatirtha, 22 January, 1976).

5. There are costs to be recovered in the process of transmission of knowledge. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself did so, for example, in the area of book distribution containing spiritual knowledge:

«We are not businessman, that we give you something and charge something. Of course, when we give you book, we take, because we have to pay to the printers.» (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 7.1, 8 September, 1973).

«I have told Los Angeles tape-making operation that they should distribute to our devotees at cost price—to nondevotee that is another thing. We should not make exorbitant profit by exploiting each other in the matter of vital Krishna Consciousness paraphernalia such as books, tapes, etc. which are vital for our preaching work and for the devotees' personal advancement in Krishna Consciousness.» (SPL to Hamsaduta, 20 January, 1972).

6. A person who pays for the knowledge they receive will appreciate it more. There are cases when Śrīla Prabhupāda charged not only for the books but also for the admission to his lectures.

«And try to sell some book. You pay something. That means he is giving some service, the hard-earned money. That will also go to his credit. And then, when he'll concerned that "I have paid for it. Let me see what this nonsense has written. All right. Read." And that will also convince him.» (Room Conversation, 4 October, 1975, Mauritius.).

«No we know that we can't make free programs here anymore. Now, whenever I would give lecture in public, you should take 5 or 2 dollars as an entrance fee. There should be some fee, because whenever we make free programs, anyone can come and make some disturbance. (Memories of Srila Prabhupada, Madhudvisa, it is not original text, but translated back to English from Russian translation of original text).

«"Śrīla Prabhupāda's newspaper ad: "Study the spiritual secret of "Bhagwat Geeta" at home by correspondence and be a strong man. Full course fee Rs. 50 only. The instruction is imparted not in the ordinary imaginative way of qualified interpretations, but in the "Parampara" system of preceptorial succession. All questions are properly solved. Apply A. C. Bhaktivedanta. Students of all communities and nationalities are welcome."» (Prabhupada Lilamrita, chapter 8).

7. Besides the danger that brahmanas (teachers) might lose purity of the motives, it is also important to fear the loss of understanding by other members of the society that everything in the society really belongs to brahmanas.

«In actuality, everything in the world belongs to the brāhmaṇas, and out of their humility the brāhmaṇas accept charity from the kṣatriyas, or kings, and the vaiśyas, or merchants. Everything belongs to the brāhmaṇas, but the kṣatriya government and the mercantile people keep everything in custody, like bankers, and whenever the brāhmaṇas need money, the kṣatriyas and vaiśyas should supply it. It is like a savings account with money which the depositor can draw out at his will. The brāhmaṇas, being engaged in the service of the Lord, have very little time to handle the finances of the world, and therefore the riches are kept by the

kṣatriyas, or the kings, who are to produce money upon the brāhmaṇas' demand. Actually the brāhmaṇas or Vaiṣṇavas do not live at others' cost; they live by spending their own money, although it appears that they are collecting this money from others. Kṣatriyas and vaiśyas have no right to give charity, for whatever they possess belongs to the brāhmaṇas. Therefore charity should be given by the kṣatriyas and vaiśyas under the instructions of the brāhmaṇas. Unfortunately at the present moment there is a scarcity of brāhmaṇas, and since the so-called kṣatriyas and vaiśyas do not carry out the orders of the brāhmaṇas, the world is in a chaotic condition.» («Srimad-Bhagavatam, 4.22.46).

8. More mature Vaishnavas and brahmanas can engage finances in the service of Krishna and distribute them fairly in the society better than others, thereby protecting people from misuse of funds.

«The four sections of human society, namely the brāhmaṇas, the kṣatriyas, the vaiśyas and the śūdras, are meant to live peacefully in a cooperative mood; this is possible when they are guided by expert Vedic brāhmaṇas who perform sacrifices and distribute wealth equally.» (Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, chapter 20).

«When such possessions are given to brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas who can engage them in the service of the Lord because of their advancement in spiritual life, this indirectly helps the person who gives the charity, for he is thus relieved of sinful reactions.» (Chaitanya Charitamrita, Antya-lila, 3.139).

Synthesis of Different Aspects of the Culture of Financial Selflessness.



It is the duty of anyone engaged in education to make education as accessible as possible and to teach as selfless as possible. When the primary motive of education is to earn money for sensual pleasures, either through fixed cost or through donations, then the promotion of such education would be a form of adharma. On the other hand, it is the duty of devotees to make generous donations to promote education and to learn to appreciate more the efforts of those who educate them. A recommended minimum of donation for courses can be specified. This option (not the only one) ensures, on the one hand, that education is accessible and, on the other hand, that a culture of conscious donation is nurtured. It means that students are asked to make some kind of sacrifice of gratitude, and they are oriented to overcome the resistance of the mind and act in accordance with dharma to serve the mission. At the same time, it is possible to admit a student without a donation, if a student is unable to donate but still meets all other requirements. It is encouraged if a student can donate more than the recommended minimum.

In addition to the recommended donations, in case there are serious financial expenses that may not be recouped from donations, a teacher may place the cost of the course as a required course fee. In such a case, it is a good idea to consider alternative sources of finances that can fund

participation of those devotees who cannot pay for their participation for various reasons, although it would be beneficial for them to undergo this education.

As for the principle of selflessness, the amount of gratitude (e.g., the recommended donation) should usually be calculated so that a teacher's allowance is comparable to the average income of the citizens of the country of residence but will not nurture selfish motives. It should also help devotees engaged in education to be oriented toward the example of those who lead simple and exalted lives. However, devotees should not be led into a state of scarcity which, like a state of luxury, may arise false motives in their minds. Thus, if a Vaishnava teacher knows how to utilize all their finances in the service to Krishna, there is no quantitative limit to obtain them.

However, to protect devotees any educational endeavour, be it an individual teacher, a siksha guru or a diksha guru, or a large educational project, must be accountable for its income and expenses for these activities to the appropriate authorized body: a community council, a regional secretary, an education department, a governing board, etc.

It would also be a bonus to publish general financial information to the general public in order to protect the minds of devotees from doubts about the leaders and undesirable jealousy. On the other hand, it is advisable for devotees who observe a project externally and sometimes do not know all the details of the project, its expenses, and the motives of its organizers (who, for example, may direct income from it to other subsidized educational projects) to avoid criticizing the projects, since there is a great possibility of committing Vaishnava-aparadha.

Thus, we have discussed in detail the principle of selflessness in terms of finances. In other aspects where self-interest may also appear in the principle of living leadership, a reader can relate to the analogy of this example.

Common mistakes of the principle of living guidance

1. to misunderstand the practicality of the list of a guru's responsibilities given at the beginning of the description of the principle. It shows what opportunities must be arranged for devotees in our society so that the principle of living leadership is truly manifested in our society and is not just a formality. Thus, it is important for every leader in their area of responsibility to check this list and make sure that no function is omitted, deliberately neglected, or forgotten. And that in our area of responsibility to provide an opportunity for every devotee to receive one or another aspect of living leadership;
2. not to understand the practical role of a spiritual master that sometimes results in misunderstanding of the importance of the role of a spiritual master in principle, or in



rejecting living guidance and reducing it to a formal acceptance of initiation or even rejecting the need to accept a living spiritual master at all;

3. not to understand that guidance is the essence of a teacher-student relationship, and that to simply follow the guidance of a spiritual teacher is sufficient for adequate progress in spiritual life;
4. to lose focus on Śrīla Prabhupāda, when the personality of a diksha guru no longer strengthens a mentee's connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda in their mind, but in some sense overshadows him and a diksha guru becomes closer and more intimate to a devotee than Śrīla Prabhupāda and ISKCON;
5. to misunderstand how guru-tattva is manifested in ISKCON through various representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and consequently a lack of respect for other Vaishnavas except a diksha-guru. Usually, such a situation is also a symptom of iconisation of a diksha-guru, when for a devotee a diksha-guru is a picture on the altar and a pleasant to the mind lecture but not instructions. As well as to idealize a diksha guru when the diksha qualification is elevated in mind to an exorbitant level that it does not require;
6. misunderstanding of the guru-tattva results in misunderstanding that in ISKCON it is not a diksha guru who is responsible for a disciple but GBC council who authorizes various devotees, including diksha gurus, to assume responsibility for providing living guidance and care for devotees. And these devotees are accountable to their seniors and ultimately to G.B.C. council for the quality of the performance of the duties assigned to them in relation to those in their care. Also, this mistake involves a failure to understand that ISKCON is a complex organization with different lines of leadership, in which a disciple must receive instruction coherently from a variety of sources;
7. not to have a standard with which a devotee can reconcile different kinds of siksha, when the role of a diksha guru or a mentor is rejected under the pretext of the diversity and primordially of siksha;
8. not to understand the existence of two kinds of siksha-gurus and, accordingly, two different kinds of relations with them and different etiquette in relations. In particular, there is insufficient awareness that siksha-gurus, yet unliberated, are still siksha-gurus but they cannot perform all the functions of a guru because of insufficient qualifications. Hence, either there is inadequate respect for such siksha-gurus or, on the contrary, they are elevated to a level of respect and subordination that they cannot "digest" and it could cause them to make mistakes that would harm a mentee;
9. lack of accountability of a mentor to the seniors and understanding that they do not perform their service by themselves but serve the seniors and are accountable to them. As a consequence, there is a lack of accountability to them in different areas and aspects;

10. insufficient engagement of devotees in spiritual care for others, even though they might already be partially engaged in this service, or, conversely, engagement of devotees in living leadership duties for which they are not yet qualified, and inadequate supervision of their activities;
11. to attempt to force initiation or acceptance of living leadership, especially acceptance of the leadership of ISKCON as an organization on devotees who are not ready yet. A more detailed discussion of this matter is in the principle of systematicity;
12. loss of selflessness of one of the parties in living leadership, when givers of knowledge do so with false motives, or when givers of knowledge do not help receivers of knowledge to become selfless in the process.



Principle of Systematicity

Principle of Systematicity

If we look at different worldviews, we see that atheists, be they ordinary materialists or Mayawadis, reject systematicity. In their view, everything happened by coincidence out of the emptiness. The world is not a complete system but only the result of multiple coincidences that replace one another. Therein lies a fundamental difference with Vaishnavas, who believe that the world has a prime cause, a Personality, and that the present world system is a consequence of His will. Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke many times about the world's observed systemic nature and even used it as evidence of the intelligence of the Creator of creation



«Such a nice creation. Everyone can appreciate this created cosmic manifestation, how it is nicely working. The sun is rising exactly in time. Without any division even 1/10,000 part of a second. The moon is rising, the seasons are changing. In the season, the fruits and flowers coming. So in this way the whole cosmic manifestation is going on, very orderly, systematically. Everyone can understand that. So unless there is some abhijna, very clever brain who knows everything, how it is created? But they say that it has come out of nothing. What is this nonsense? Can such thing come out of nothing? Is that very good reasoning? No» (Lecture, 26 April, 1973).

In fact, material world is a huge system working like a clock. This principle is manifested in everything: in the step-by-step development of the bodies of living beings, in the circular change of seasons, in the movement of planets along their orbits. And it is amazing how everything in this world is interconnected. Mundane scientists do not see these connections; for example, they do not understand the connection between humans and the movement of planets but that doesn't mean that they don't exist. Vedic astrology successfully applies these connections to the practical life of a society. The Vedas describe in great detail the systemic nature of our world, which manifest itself even on the largest scale, the alternation of yugas, the systematic manifestation and destruction of

the cosmic universe, the process of evolution of a living being and the transition from one life form to another, the laws of karma and reincarnation. There is a system in everything. No wonder many mathematicians and physicists believed in God because they could come into contact with a small particle of the unique beauty of the connections and structure of this world, and after that they could not remain adherent to the concept of the coincidence of the origin of the universe.

For us to realize that our world is optimal is one aspect of the systematic principle: it is a perfect system created by God. We only need to see and understand this system:

«The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the Complete Whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the Complete Whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance.» (Īśo Invocation).

«His energies are so expansive that they systematically conduct everything in the cosmic manifestation without a flaw, although the Supreme Lord is far, far away.» (Bhagavad-gita, 8.22).

If people do not understand that, then, as Śrīla Prabhupāda describes in the commentary on Śrī Ishopanishad introduction, they try to invent their own systems instead of understanding the Lord's system and acting according to it as an ideal system. But all these attempts are doomed to fail because a living being cannot create an ideal system of its own. In fact, a living being only needs to align its life with the system of the Lord that already exists; and that is how it will reach perfection.

Apart from the fact that all the different aspects from various areas fit together perfectly, the uniqueness of the Lord's system is that the Lord's system is always perfect. Unless He Himself changes it, as for example, Lord Chaitanya in Kali Yuga gives a different mode of activity, a different system for a living being to act:

«Therefore the only reformatory method is: harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam, kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatih anyatha [Cc. Adi 17.21]. In this age of Kali, people are so fallen, so degraded, that it is not possible to introduce systematically the whole Vedic principle; it is not possible. That is not possible. It is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's grace, mercy, that He has given us mercifully, vairagya-vidya-nija-bhakti [Cc. Madhya 6.254], just to teach very short-cut method. What is that? Chant Hare Krsna. Simple» (Lecture, 25 July, 1973).

If we accept the system given by the Lord, that is, we receive this understanding through the parampara, all we need to do is to apply it. And we are guaranteed to achieve results because it will not stop working after ten or twenty years unlike worldly systems. Certainly, its application should consider time, place, and circumstances, but the Lord's plan itself is perfect at all times. We cannot say that it is inapplicable in any circumstance.

However, the system implies laws and rules and it is its essence that differentiates it from chaos. The simple reason people reject God's system is because it imposes on them the need to act according to His will, for He creates a system of the universe that follows His will:

«Law is not blind, or something dropped from the sky. Law is law. It is made by somebody. That is law. It is working systematically. That is law. So when there is systematic law, there is systematic law-giver, controller, supervisor, superintendent. So we are not imagining, but we'll take it from authority, Vedic information, which is accepted by a great culture, great acaryas, great teachers» (Lecture, 22 May, 1973).

Therefore, devotees do not reject the laws of existence. Sometimes aspiring Vaishnavas consider themselves excessively "transcendental" and beyond the laws of this world but they actually reject them. But the law of gravity remains in effect on these people, at least up to the stage of attaining mystical perfection. Likewise, the other laws of existence – karma, bhoga-tyagi, the three gunas of nature, and etc. – are still applicable to them. As devotion develops, other spiritual laws begin to take place but this process is not instantaneous. A devotee changes their life in a different direction overnight spiritualizing their activity, but the inertia will still remain for some time:

«The process is so nice. Just like a fan is moving and make the switch off. Still you will see the fan is moving, but rest assured it will stop because the switch is off. Similarly, a person taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, his material life's switch is off immediately. And even though it is seen it is moving, it will stop very soon. So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement means to put off the switch of material existence immediately. It is so nice. Yes.» (Lecture, 11 October, 1968).

Indeed, the fact of time itself is also an element of the systematic nature of our world because it implies progression. Everything in this world happens gradually, and it takes time for a result to manifest itself.

«Those who are engaged in fruitive activities are entangled in different stages and forms of sinful reactions. For instance, when the seed of a particular tree is sown, the tree does not appear immediately to grow; it takes some time. It is first a small, sprouting plant, then it assumes the form of a tree, then it flowers and bears fruit, and, when it is complete, the flowers and fruits are enjoyed by persons who have sown the seed of the tree. Similarly, a man performs a sinful act, and like a seed it takes time to fructify. There are different stages. The sinful action may have already stopped within the individual, but the results or the fruit of that sinful action are still to be enjoyed. There are sins which are still in the form of a seed, and there are others which are already fructified and are giving us fruit, which we are enjoying as distress and pain.» (Bhagavad-gita, 9.2, commentary).

Therefore, a desire to unnaturally accelerate the natural course of things – for example, to become a pure Vaishnava at once; or impatience at the pace of other Vaishnavas, our mentees; or expectation of the suffering to vanish immediately because of our devotion – is also one of the signs

of rejecting the law of systematicity. Its understanding gives devotees inner peace because they are able to see that everything in the world takes its course, the way it is supposed to.

One can also see how the principle of systematicity is manifested in the activities that the Lord assigns as practices recommended for spiritual elevation. For example, varnashrama-dharma is nothing less than a perfectly regulated (i.e., systematized) society that distinguishes it from uncivilized society:

«So unless the human society accepts this principle of varnasrama-dharma ordained by Krsna, the Supreme Lord, he is not considered amongst the human being. They are as good as animals because there is no regular, systematic principles of how to live, a human being» (Lecture, 30 July, 1973).

The Scriptures as a whole show the way how to gradually break free from the power of desire for selfish enjoyment and explain the way how to regulate gratification of the senses in one's life in order to become free from this disease:

«That is the Vedic principles, that you enjoy your indriyas in a systematic way so that you may not fall again.» (Morning walk, May 9, 1974).

The principle of systematicity is manifested even in Sanskrit:

«In Sanskrit, every word is grammatically very systematically bound up. Every word. Therefore it is called Sanskrit language. Sanskrit means reformed. We cannot manufacture by whims; it must be strictly according to the grammatical rules and regulations» (Lecture, 31 August, 1972).

Also, the effectiveness of Vedic mantras was based on this principle:

«... Pronouncing the Vedic mantras, which are practiced systematically by accent and meter by the brāhmaṇas who are meant for administering Vedic rites» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.4.13, literal translation).

One might think that by virtue of Lord Chaitanya, who gave us the way to chant the holy name instead of the Vedic mantras, we become free of this principle because there are no clear rules and regulations in chanting the holy name. However, even the Maha-mantra is systematic, as it is a specific sequence of the holy names not any combination of them

«There are sixteen names: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Actually, there are three names only—Hare, Krsna, and Rama—but they are very nicely, systematically assorted in sixteen names.» (Lecture, 26 April, 1969).

Bhakti-yoga must also be seen through the prism of the principle of systematicity. In fact, all vaidhi-sadhana-bhakti is based on it.

«The Bhagavad-gītā (14.26) also affirms this statement of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī when the Lord says that anyone who executes devotional service systematically without deviation can attain the perfection of Brahmana by surpassing the contamination of the three modes of material nature, and when the Brahmana perfection is still more advanced by the selfsame execution of devotional service, there is no doubt at all that one can attain the supreme spiritual planet, Goloka Vṛndāvana, without change of body» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.15.47-48).

«The devotee who has confidence in devotional service to the Lord systematically follows the rules and regulations, with the faith that he will achieve the platform of transcendental life» ("The Nectar of Devotion", chapter 11, literal translation).

«So chandamsy adaiyita guror ahutas cet suyantritah. Very well behaved. Just like machine works systematically. You have seen. Everyone has seen. The machine of the watch is working very systematically, correctly. Similarly, every student, every disciple must work very correctly, like the machine. There is no question, "Why you did not attend school or the class?" You cannot say that "This is this. This is this." No. As machine work, everyone should attend the class, rise early in the morning, attend mangala-arati. This is called suyantritah, working like machine, no discrepancy. That is wanted.» (Lecture, 14 April, 1976).

From the above quotes we can see, that systematicity of bhakti is manifested in the form of regulated activities, that is, the existence of the rules and regulations of bhakti yoga. Also, the necessity of its regularity and consistency of practice, which we discuss in another section of this book within the principle of continuity of education (actually, one aspect of systematicity, that is, regularity) as well as consistency in teaching bhakti-yoga, which we will talk about later in this section.

If we reject the Lord's will concerning the operation of the external energy of the Lord and the function of a living being within that energy, it is one of the manifestations of impersonalism. And if we reject the laws of the practice of devotional service, it is one of the manifestations of sahajia. Both are not bhakti but something else, pseudo-spirituality.

«The so-called path of bhakti practiced by unauthorized persons without knowledge of bhakti may be easy, but when it is practiced factually according to the rules and regulations, the speculative scholars and philosophers fall away from the path. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in his Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.101): ... "Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upaniṣads, Purāṇas and Nārada Paṣcarātra is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society." ("Bhagavad-gita", 7.3).

Indeed, a devotee understands how everything in the world serves the Lord and tries to become connected to that service in accordance with the Scriptures. Ultimately, consistency of devotional service is possible when a devotee begins to see the world as a genuinely perfect system

that includes the Lord rather than excludes Him. The illusion that hides the connection of everything with the Lord from a living being is gone, and one begins to see everything in God and God in everything:

«He who sees systematically everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, who sees all living entities as His parts and parcels, and who sees the Supreme Lord within everything never hates anything or any being» ("Isopanishad", Mantra 6, literal translation).

«The most advanced devotee sees within everything the soul of all souls, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Kṛṣṇa. Consequently, he sees systematically everything in relation to the Supreme Lord and understands that everything that exists is eternally situated within the Lord» ("Chaitanya-charitamrita", Madhya-lila, 16.74, literal translation).

Different aspects of systematicity

In general, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw education in our society as rather structural, and he sometimes even described our society as an educational institution and suggested to write a curricular:

«Q. 3. Curriculums: Study of Bhagavad-gita As It Is; Srimad-Bhagavatam; (3 vol.); Nectar of Devotion; Teachings of Lord Caitanya; Vedanta Sutra. (In this way, arrange the curriculum program around these our books, and the professors, those who have been with us ample time, such as Brahmanaanda, Hayagriva, Kirtanananda, and have also academic qualifications). This is the complete course requiring to study 7 years. When the first exam is given the student making passing grade is given the title of Bhakti-sastri, second exam, Bhaktivaibhava, 3rd exam, Bhaktivedanta» (SPL to all temples, March 14, 1969).

Let us look at a few aspects of systematic education as applied to our society.

Regularity. One aspect of systematicity, as mentioned above, is regularity, or repeated action. Many devotees may become tired of the same information as it is no longer new to the mind. We often hear that Śrīla Prabhupāda's books "become boring" to people, and they want to rush and learn the secondary nuances that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not talk about. But repetition is one aspect of systematicity because it gives strength to our education. In Vedic times people were "shruti-dhara", they could memorize something instantly. However, in Kali Yuga, people do not have that qualification. Neither they have qualification to find love for God by chanting the holy name just once. Therefore, regular repetition is important in education:

«To emphasize something to an ordinary person, one may repeat it three times, just as one might say, "You must do this! You must do this! You must do this!" Thus the Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa repeatedly emphasizes the chanting of the holy name so that people may take it seriously and thus free themselves from the clutches of māyā. It is our practical experience in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world that many millions of people are factually

coming to the spiritual stage of life simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra regularly, according to the prescribed principles. Therefore our request to all our students is that they daily chant at least sixteen rounds of this harer nāma mahā-mantra offenselessly, following the regulative principles. Thus their success will be assured without a doubt.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 17.23).

In fact, the process of kirtanam is built on it: although we usually call it "chanting," the essence of kirtanam is the repetition of what we hear to immerse our consciousness in it even deeper:

«The word śravaṇa refers to giving aural reception to the holy name and descriptions of the Lord's form, qualities, entourage and pastimes as explained in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhagavad-gītā and similar authorized Scriptures. After aurally receiving such messages, one should memorize these vibrations and repeat them (kīrtanam).» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 7.5.23-24).

Giriraj Swami recalls an interesting story regarding Śrīla Prabhupāda's approach to repetitive learning:

«Apart from discussion, simple repetition can also lead to understanding. In the early days of ISKCON, Jadurāṇī asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, "What does it mean that 'the moon was churned from the ocean of milk'?" He replied, "Just repeat: 'The moon was churned from the ocean of milk.' " He had her repeat the sentence three times and then asked her, "Now do you understand?" And she replied, "Yes, the moon was churned from the ocean of milk." Also, when The Nectar of Devotion was first published, Śrīla Prabhupāda told the devotees that if there were any portions that they did not understand, they should read them over and over again. And from the position of author, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "It is not enough that we say that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead in one purport; we will say that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead in every purport."» (Memories of Giriraja Swami, article on hermeneutics).

Thus, education in our society must take this aspect into account so that devotees become grounded in the knowledge through repetition and study it from different angles.

Graduality and continuity. These aspects mean that a devotee is not given all knowledge at once. The education is arranged according to one's adhikar to attain that knowledge. And one progresses successively and learns spiritual science.

«If you do not accept in the beginning that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord, then try to understand this gradually. That is education. You can begin by accepting that there is somebody who is supreme.» (Civilization and Transcendence, Chapter 12).

«So Bhagavad-gītā is not very high class Vedic literature. It is just the entrance, ABCD of Vedic literature. ABCD, entrance. Just like matriculation examination, school-leaving examination, then you enter into college, and then get your graduate, become a graduate, and then post-

graduate, so the Bhagavad-gītā is just entrance for, entrance examination for spiritual education. It is not very... It is written for the common men, common men, common men, householders, less intelligent men, woman class, like that.» (Lecture, 27 May, 1966).

And if a student hits the limit, they don't try to push them to a level that they are not yet ready for but continue to teach them according to their level through repetitive learning.

«A teacher instructs the student if the student is capable of taking more and more instructions. Otherwise, in spite of being instructed by the teacher, the student cannot make strides in his understanding» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 7.1.9).

We are now accustomed to the fact that school and university education is the norm of life, but if to speak of qualifications in education, education has only recently become mass-market. In Russia, it was a privilege mainly for boys from the wealthy classes until 1700. Only two hundred and fifty years ago girls received the right to education (under Catherine II), and two hundred years ago (under Alexander I) that opportunity really began available to the poor population, but not for the peasants who represented about half of the population of the country. A hundred and fifty years ago access to education became periodically available to everyone, every ten or twenty years the rules were tightened, then became more liberal. It only became more accessible to people a hundred years ago when compulsory primary education was introduced in the 1930s; before that time many people in the country could never systematically study anywhere in their entire lives. And just sixty years ago, in 1958, secondary education became compulsory. The mass education of children in universities was an innovation of the last thirty years, because at some point it became possible to get a better-paid job with a university degree, regardless of whether the knowledge of university education was useful at the workplace.

If to look at the roots, at the Vedic conception of a society, then education was not for everyone:

«Higher education is not meant for everyone. Only selected individuals trained in brahminical culture should be allowed to pursue a higher education» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 17.253).

«Similarly, in the Vedas it is also said, "Unless one has acquired brahminical qualifications, he should not study Vedas." So in every department, if you want to take education in a particular line, you have to qualify yourself to enter that school or college» (Lecture, 3 January, 1969).

Even Krishna Himself acts in this manner, He gives education only to those who are qualified:

«There is education from within and without. From within the Supersoul gives you education. Krsna gives you education. Not to everyone. Who is devotee, to him, the Lord speaks from within. ... God is so kind that He is within, giving you education, provided you are prepared to hear» (Lecture, 18 March, 1968).

And it is not about the pride of the brahmanical class, it is the principle of systematicity: when knowledge is acquired by those who are not properly qualified, it will only create disturbance in the society because these people will not be able to use it correctly. That is, they can absorb knowledge, but they cannot use it adequately:

«So education, culture, is meant for the higher two classes, the brāhmaṇas and the kṣatriyas. Education means for them, those who are intelligent, for them. Education is not for masses. Now it is called mass education. So mass education means it will produce undesirable elements. That's all.» (Lecture, 22 June, 1975).

The Vedic system was established with the purpose of training leaders, while others were trained by following their example and instructions, that is, by being under the living guidance of personalities with a sound character and intellect. This is a principle that has been partially abandoned nowadays:

«Prabhupāda: ... If you want to become an educated man or if you want to give first-class education, it is not for the mass. It is for the leader. Yad yad acarati sresthas tat tad evetaro janah [Bg. 3.21]. If the leaders are educated, then others will follow. But if the leaders are not educated, what the others will do? That is the difficulty. And the so-called leaders, without being educated, they become leader.» (Lecture, 25 December, 1976).

«Prabhupāda: No, no, America is not... I am talking of the [indistinct], the class who will guide the aim of life, brāhmaṇa class, and a class that will give them protection from injuries by others—kṣatriya class. Then the next class, food-producing men, they do not require. Actually only brāhmaṇas, they require education. All..., all others, they will simply see and learn. So little education required—that you can learn by hearing only, that's all. Suppose a brāhmaṇa class says that "This is good; this is bad." So you hear and accept. It doesn't require to go to school and college. So education will be simplified. [break] Things have become very much complicated.» (Conversation on the train, January 11, 1977).

This passage of the book is not to say that most people do not need to learn the science of devotion. On the contrary, we are well aware that Lord Krishna and Lord Chaitanya came into this world to spread the holy name everywhere:

«Spiritual knowledge is very difficult to achieve, and so in order to make it more easily attainable, the Supreme Lord Himself comes in His original form as Śrī Kṛṣṇa and gives His instruction directly to an associate like Arjuna, just so that the people in general may take advantage of this spiritual knowledge.» (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 4).

And there are not any material aspects to be considered as a disqualification for devotional service:

«In the Middle Ages, after the disappearance of Lord Caitanya's great associate Lord Nityānanda, a class of priestly persons claimed to be the descendants of Nityānanda, calling themselves the gosvāmī caste. They further claimed that the practice and spreading of devotional service belonged only to their particular class, which was known as Nityānanda-vaṁśa.<...> The so-called brāhmaṇas claim that one who is not born into a brāhmaṇa family cannot receive the sacred thread and cannot become a high-grade Vaiṣṇava. But we do not accept such a theory because it is not supported by Rūpa Gosvāmī or by the strength of the various Scriptures. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī specifically mentions herein that every man has the birthright to accept devotional service and to become Kṛṣṇa conscious.» (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 5).

«That is brāhmaṇa-ism. Brāhmaṇa means liberal, and just the opposite word of brāhmaṇa is kṛpaṇa, miser. A brāhmaṇa should give chance to everyone, even to the pāpa-yoni, how to become brāhmaṇa. That is real brāhmaṇa. And the rascal who thinks that "I shall remain simply brāhmaṇa; others shall remain mlecchas and yavanas," he is not brāhmaṇa; he is śūdra, because his mind is so crippled. He does not want to see others to become brāhmaṇa.» (Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.9.49, 15 June, 1973).

The purpose of the discussion of educational qualification was to show that according to the principle of systematicity even spiritual knowledge must be given in accordance with adhikar (spiritual, not material adhikar, based on one's conditioned nature). Hiding spiritual knowledge from people, as well as giving access to spiritual truths to those who are not yet ready, is a crime to some extent.

«So unless one elevates people to spiritual knowledge, one is practicing violence. One should try his best to distribute real knowledge to the people, so that they may become enlightened and leave this material entanglement. That is nonviolence.» (Bhagavad Gita, 13.8-12).

«The ninth offense is to instruct those who are not interested in chanting the holy name of the Lord about the transcendental nature of the holy name. If such instruction is imparted to an unwilling audience, the act is considered to be an offense at the feet of the holy name.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.1.11).

This is true both for preaching in a wider society and for the education of devotees. That is, it is necessary to inspire one to move forward, and active encouragement to do so must come from the seniors. They cannot simply wait for the juniors to "mature" on their own, they must actively inspire and care, and as soon as a person is ready to engage in deeper learning, give them that opportunity. For example, if a person becomes ready to help others in some way, one should be given some of these responsibilities because to serve as a mentor is also an aspect of one's own learning. On the other hand, until one is ready for some form of educational practice, they should not be given access to it.

Structurality. Structurality of education is the third aspect; its perception and the logic of the Scriptures, an ability to see the sastras as an integrated system in which each instruction has its own place, just as there is a place in the bookcase for each object.

«The Absolute Truth is systematically explained in the Vedānta-sūtra (generally known as the Vedānta philosophy), which in turn is elaborately explained by the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, a commentary by the same author. The Bhagavad-gītā is the preliminary study of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam for understanding the constitutional position of the Supreme Lord, or the Absolute Truth.» (The Journey of Self-Discovery, Chapter 1.2).

«In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam the transcendental pastimes of the Lord are narrated, and the narration is systematically depicted by Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Thus the subject matter is appealing to all classes of persons, including those who seek liberation to relish the mellow of becoming one with the supreme whole» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.1.3, literal translation).

In this sense, in addition to regular reading the Scriptures, it can be extremely helpful to study their structure and integrity so that each of the statements of the Scriptures integrates into the overall picture of the world they present to us.

Complexity. It is interesting to note that the last quote says that through its systematic presentation Śrīmad Bhagavatam has become appealing even to people who aspire to impersonal liberation. Thus, the fourth aspect of systematicity implies a structure with an approach to everyone. Sometimes the system is seen as a kind of conveyor belt devoid of individuality, but in fact the ideal system includes an individual approach, which we will talk about in the description of the relevant principle. Here we will only demonstrate how Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to expand ISKCON's educational system when he saw that it was not working ideally in terms of its holistic approach to systematicity:

«Satsvarūpa: Today you've been saying that the Vaiṣṇava is the highest, above the brāhmaṇa. But then we've also understood that everyone in ISKCON is a Vaiṣṇava.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Vaiṣṇava everyone, even if he's not brāhmaṇa. Jīvera svarūpa haya nitya-kṛṣṇa-dāsa [Cc. Madhya 20.108-109]. But you have to gradually bring him to that pure consciousness that "I am servant of Kṛṣṇa." Here the bodily conception is going on, "I am American," "I am Indian," "I am this," "I am that."

Satsvarūpa: If in our society we say, "Śrīla Prabhupāda wants some to be śūdra..."

Prabhupāda: No, no, no. I don't want. I want everyone to become Vaiṣṇava. But because he's a śūdra, it is not possible to bring him immediately to the platform of brāhmaṇa, or Vaiṣṇava. Therefore falling down. Therefore system must be. But even if he remains a śūdra, he's a Vaiṣṇava.

Hari-śauri: So we'd have to completely revise the whole system that we have now.

Prabhupāda: No. Whatever we have, that is all right. But we see by experience that they're falling down. There must be systematic. Why falling down? Because he was not fit for the

position, therefore he has fallen. Better remain in his position and become perfect. Why artificially bring them? There is no need». (Room Conversation, 14 February, 1977)

We will also talk in more detail about varnashrama in the section dealing with the principle of individuality of education. But it is important to understand that it is crucial for us to form our society in such a way that devotees of different levels – shraddha, sadhu-sanga, etc. – have a sense of belonging to it. So that devotees do not feel that they become a part of ISKCON only after initiation, but that at each level they are offered appropriate steps of practice and identification with the family of the Lord. We will talk more about it in the section devoted to the steps of bhakti.

Complexity also implies a multifaceted approach to education, as we discuss in detail in the sections on the principles of practicality and continuity of education. Various aspects of life must be involved in order to help a devotee to progress spiritually; that is a systematic or holistic approach.

About exams. Examination is one of the tools of the system that makes it work, so that everyone can find a training program that meets one's needs:

«Everyone should be tested to find out which education he is suited for.» (The Science of Self-Realization, Chapter 6).

Exams also allow to understand what exactly a person has not completely absorbed and not for the purpose of putting a " label " on them, but to deepen their understanding through repetition of the learned material. Exams are also useful as a motivation for learning, that is a more serious attitude to it, but it is more related to the principle of consciousness of education. In addition, examinations allow us to protect a devotee from unqualified actions that are premature to their actual level:

«Anyone wishing to be initiated as a brahmana will have to pass the Bhaktisastrī exam and anyone wishing to take sannyasa will have to pass the Bhaktivaibhava examination as well. This will prevent our Society from degrading to the level of so many other institutions where, in order to maintain the Temple, they accept all third class men as brahmanas. Any sannyasi or brahmanas already initiated who fail to pass the exams will be considered low class or less qualified. Anyone wishing to be 2nd initiated will sit for examination once a year at Mayapur. Answers will be in essay form and authoritative quotations will be given a bigger score. During the exams books may not be consulted» (SPL to all GBC, January 6, 1976).

It is important to understand that while in our society we do not deny the accuracy of scriptural knowledge because, as Śrīla Prabhupāda says, brahmana means "pandit", a real exam is not just a knowledge of scriptural truths but a test of their application in practice:

Prabhupāda: Examination or no examination, if you, they practice the rules, that is sufficient examination. Suppose one of the items, that one has to rise early in the morning... So if one is rising early in the morning, then what is the examination? That is already examined. If one has to rise early in the morning, attend the maṅgala-ārati, sitting in the class and reading

Bhagavad-gītā, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa... These are all practical. There is no need of examination. If he is doing, then it is examination passed. (Conversation, 5 January 1977).

Therefore, it is important for the educational system to emphasize the test of educational quality not so much through theoretical understanding as through practical application of this knowledge in life.

ISKCON as an Integrated Educational System



«Actually our real position is followers of the varnasrama-dharma. Four varnas and four asramas. This is the stepping stone for civilized life, varnasrama. Brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sudra; and brahmachari, grhastha, vanaprastha, sannyasa. This system of social order, I mean to say, spiritual and material, it is so systematically done that one who follows this system, automatically he becomes at the end Kṛṣṇa conscious» (Lecture, 18 April, 1972).

Like varnashrama, where its entire social structure was designed with the only purpose to facilitate a successful spiritual growth of its members, our society also needs to be structured so that all its institutions are designed for the transmission of siksha in a systematic way.

This implies several aspects. First, education is not a part of ISKCON, education is ISKCON. Every programme in ISKCON can be viewed from the perspective of how it accomplishes certain educational functions in the broadest sense of the word. How book distribution, participation in the Deities' worship, or care for cows helps one to become Krishna conscious. As there are different departments in a university, and the purpose of each department is to teach a certain aspect of material science, so in ISKCON there may be different departments, but they are all either educational or auxiliary. Like a university cloakroom because its purpose is not just to keep coats but to help students obtain education. So, we can see our temples and congregations as educational institutions and build them according to this vision:

«We have purchased so many churches because people have no more interest. There is no education. Temple means spiritual educational shelter. People should come, they should learn what is spiritual life, what is God, what is my relationship with. That is temple.» (Lecture, 8 March, 1972).

«So every temple should be educational center, and the brāhmaṇas should be engaged. They should be properly educated and they should teach others also. In this way, temple means education in spiritual life» (Conversation, August 22, 1966.).

Just as in a machine its various parts operate in a coherent manner, our educational institution must also be aligned. Specifically, the mechanisms of the interaction between the various aspects of our society and, in particular, the institutions of siksha, diksha and the administrative line of leadership must be clearly defined and implemented. We discuss it in detail as we talk about the principle of living leadership.

It is also important to understand that ISKCON is a movement; Śrīla Prabhupāda himself regularly spoke about it as "Krishna consciousness movement". Undoubtedly, movement is the essence of our society, as we do move, we do act in devotional service. But, as previously pointed out, the engagement in bhakti and indeed in the material world in general does not reject a system, i.e., an organisation. Sometimes devotees oppose ISKCON as a movement to ISKCON as an organization. But ISKCON is an educational movement, and organization is its skeleton. And it is important not to forget both aspects during harmonious establishment of our society:

«Prabhupada: Yes. Now we are world organization. There is spiritual side, and there is material side also. That is not material side. That is also spiritual side, means systematic management. Otherwise how it will be done?» (Morning walk, December 5, 1973).

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself in the lecture (June 6, 1974) characterised the essence of human life as a remarkable sutra, which can also be applied to our society:

«Human life is meant for systematic organization of spiritual realization» (Lecture, 6 June, 1974).

Three modes of Nature



To consider the structure of the material world is one of the aspects of systematicity, and its important element is its division according to the three gunas of material nature, because everything in this world, including the world itself, is constituted of these three gunas:

«Mahat-tattva, or the great causal truth, transforms into false ego, which is manifested in three phases — cause, effect and the doer. All such activities are on the mental plane and are based on the material elements, gross senses and mental speculation.

The false ego is represented in three different modes — goodness, passion and ignorance.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.5.29).

Undoubtedly, bhakti-yoga is independent of material conditions, and independent of the gunas of material nature in particular. Thus, in Lord Chaitanya's pastimes even animals, whose bodies appear to be in far greater ignorance than human forms of life, found themselves involved in the flow of devotional service. What to speak of our realities. Indeed, there is no material condition that can stop devotional service and therefore it does not depend on any of the gunas:

«Prabhupāda: No, I'm... That is generally. Unless one becomes in goodness... But bhakti-mārga is transcendental. It does not depend on the qualities of this material nature. Ahaituki apratihātā. Ahaituki. Apratihātā. Nothing can check bhakti-mārga. Even one is in the platform of ignorance, it cannot check. It cannot check. Ahaituki apratihātā. Because it is purely spiritual. It does not depend on material conditions. It does not depend on material... These goodness, passion, ignorance, they are material conditions. So bhakti does not depend on material conditions» (Conversation, 11 July, 1973).

And yet, as you can see in the above quote, Śrīla Prabhupāda meant to say that usually the guna of goodness is beneficial for bhakti. So, the guna of goodness is not mandatory but it is favourable for devotional service.

«Unlike the miscreants, these are adherents of the regulative principles of the Scriptures, and they are called su-kṛtinaḥ, or those who obey the rules and regulations of Scriptures, the moral and social laws, and are, more or less, devoted to the Supreme Lord.» (Bhagavad-gīta, 7.16).

«Because people have no education in actual knowledge, they become irresponsible. To stop this irresponsibility, education for developing the mode of goodness of the people in general must be there. When they are actually educated in the mode of goodness, they will become sober, in full knowledge of things as they are. Then people will be happy and prosperous. Even if the majority of the people aren't happy and prosperous, if a certain percentage of the population develops Kṛṣṇa consciousness and becomes situated in the mode of goodness, then there is the possibility for peace and prosperity all over the world» (Bhagavad-gīta, 14.17, commentary).

«Such an irresponsible life is adopted by the people in the age of Kali because of a sinful desire to condemn brahminical culture, God consciousness and cow protection, for which the state is responsible. The state must employ revenue to advance these three items and thus educate the populace to prepare for death» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.19.4, purport).

Hence, we can see that Śrīla Prabhupāda viewed facilitating the practice of devotional service as one part of ISKCON's mission, and he wrote about it in the Constitution of Association before our society was registered:

To assist whenever and wherever possible in the building of a social structure on the real foundation of spiritual progress and establishment of peace and unity between men throughout the world.

To introduce to the members of the Society and humanity-at-large a simpler and more natural purpose in life by means suitable to the particular place and time, and as enjoined in the Bhagavad Gītā.

Of course, activities in the guna of goodness as such are not devotional service, and hence, it cannot be assumed that the purpose of our society is to develop the guna of goodness.

«Those who are in the modes of passion and ignorance, and even those who are in the mode of goodness, cannot go beyond the impersonal Brahmana conception of the Absolute Truth. They are bewildered before the Supreme Lord in His personal feature, which possesses all beauty, opulence, knowledge, strength, fame and renunciation. When even those who are in goodness cannot understand, what hope is there for those in passion and ignorance?» (Bhagavad-gita 7.13 purport).

But it is an auxiliary goal to achieve the main goal, and therefore we cannot reject it or consider it unimportant.

What is the benefit of the guna of goodness? Despite its materiality, it is beneficial for purification from the bondage to matter:

«Anything done in ignorance or passion does not lead to spiritual advancement. Everything done in the mode of goodness does advance one, however» (Bhagavad-gita, 10.4-5).

What is the mechanism of this effect of the guna of goodness? Why does it purify? It does so because there is a spiritual reality that is reflected into the material world. Eternally liberated living beings in the spiritual world behave in a certain way in their relationship with Krishna. Their state of consciousness belongs to the category of suddha-sattva:

«As soon as one is fully Kṛṣṇa conscious it is to be understood that one is in his pure, original constitutional position. This state of existence is called śuddha-sattva, which means that it is transcendental to the material qualities.» ((Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.3.23).

If their activities are projected onto the plan of the external energy of the Lord and Krishna consciousness is removed, such activities represent activities in the guna of goodness (of course, we do not consider here special examples like parakya-rasa). Therefore, activities in the guna of goodness are projections of the activities of the Lord's eternal companions devoid of Krishna consciousness. But they are very much similar in form, so the conduct in the guna of goodness itself is a projection of conduct onto the material world that satisfies the Lord's desires. It is this element that elevates devotees. And so, although bhakti is independent of the gunas of material nature, the guna of goodness is beneficial for bhakti. Not because the guna of goodness is "stronger" than bhakti, but because it represents a form of the conduct of the Lord's eternal companions on which the consciousness of devotional service must be superimposed.

It is interesting how Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrates this point through the third verse of The Nectar of Instruction. Both translations were composed by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself but in different places. Let us examine them carefully in relation to the guna of goodness:

«One can execute the process of bhakti-yoga successfully with full-hearted enthusiasm, perseverance and determination, by following the prescribed duties in the association of devotees and by engaging completely in activities of goodness.» (Nectar of Instruction, 3, quoted from Bhagavad-gita 6.24).

«There are six principles favorable to the execution of pure devotional service: (1) being enthusiastic, (2) endeavoring with confidence, (3) being patient, (4) acting according to regulative principles [such as śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam – hearing, chanting and remembering Kṛṣṇa], (5) abandoning the association of nondevotees, and (6) following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas. These six principles undoubtedly assure the complete success of pure devotional service.» (Nectar of Instruction, 3).

Here we can see that to act strictly in the guna of goodness is equivalent to following in the footsteps of the previous acharyas. That is, to act in the guna of goodness is to follow in the footsteps of the acharyas in the sense that although it is not a devotional service but an external projection of their behaviour. And to follow in the footsteps of the acharyas is to act in the guna of goodness because that is how they conduct themselves.

A social structure of the daiva-varnashrama-dharma is a structure in the guna of goodness, so it is an optimal social structure:

«So unless the human society is organized in the varṇāśrama-dharma, it remains animal society. And in animal society you cannot expect any intelligence or any sense of goodness or any idea of God. This is not possible» (Lecture, 16 August, 1972).

However, at different stages of the development of ISKCON we may not understand how to implement the culture of varnashrama-dharma in all aspects in our society, but we can try to do so as much as possible. When we do not understand how to apply it, we need to understand that our lives as individuals and as members of ISKCON society in their form will always relate to one of the gunas of material nature. And with the principle of systematicity in mind, it is important to align our lives and the structure of our society with the principles of the guna of goodness as much as possible.

Educational Systems of the Wider Society

Although education always existed in a society, pedagogy as a science began to be perceived and consequently systematised in the Western world only in the 1600s. Back then, Jan Amos Komenský from Bohemia, who is the father of pedagogy as a science, developed the concept of schooling that is still universally used nowadays. It included ideas of universal education, division of education into primary, secondary, and higher education, division of academic year into quarters, formation of academic classes, development of the curriculum, etc. After him many other educators worked on the development of education and its systematic aspects in particular. In fact, materialists faced quite difficult challenges in this regard; they needed to teach different technical, exact, and



human sciences in a systematic way and to do it in a way that knowledge was sufficiently unitary, i.e. coherent between different educational institutions, so that, for example, a person from one country could work successfully in another country without changing their education.

In the wider society as such, generally a qualitative system to deliver technical knowledge was developed. Certainly, we cannot adopt everything

from a common society as spiritual education is not technical. Also, the Vedic approach to the structure is usually more holistic (based on a holistic approach to objects and phenomena) than the Western one. And so, the structuring of the Scriptures is not always in the order we are accustomed to. For example, the stories in the Puranas are not recorded in chronological order, as representatives of the West would usually systematize but based on another criteria.

«Nowadays, at the present moment, history means a chronological record, but previously, history means only the important incidences at different times, they were recorded. Therefore, in Mahābhārata or any other Purāṇa also... Purāṇas are also history. We don't find any chronological incidences one after another. But the most important selected incidences, especially in connection with God realization, they are recorded.» (Lecture, 20 June, 1968).

However, in some areas this knowledge can be useful, for example, no devotee rejects arithmetic even though it has been learnt in a common society and not from the Scriptures. It is important to bear in mind the principles of the authority of knowledge derived from outside the Scriptures as discussed in several other sections of this book.

We can see that the main familiar logical points are still similar to the culture of the Scriptures which also has a certain sequence of disclosure of subjects:

«At Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira's inquiry, Bhīṣmadeva first defined all the classifications of castes and orders of life in terms of the individual's qualifications. Then he systematically, in twofold divisions, described counteraction by detachment and interaction by attachment.» (Shrimad Bhagavatam, 1.9.26).

If to look at the modern approach to the systematicity of education, classes should:

- have a transparent structure. It should be clear how each subject or sub-topic is related to a previous and subsequent one, and why they are addressed in that order;
- give enough information for a complete description, i.e., to look at the subject from different angles and perspectives, to fully cover all aspects of the topic that students are qualified for at any particular stage of their studies;

- be adjusted to the audience, even if some important aspects may be omitted;
- not to contain excessive information: anything that is not directly related to the topic and does not contribute to its understanding should be removed from the curriculum;
- rely only on the knowledge that students already have. Lessons should be structured from simple to advanced;
- be related to what students already know. The difference from the previous point is that the previous point is expanded with an indication to the link between what is already known and what is to be learnt;
- not to have only an analytical but also a visual approach to systematicity. That is, the connection should not be based only on analytical aspects but should also include visual perception to engage different aspects of thinking.

An educational product can be tested through the prism of these rules, which may in some cases improve its quality regarding its systematic presentation.

We also know that one way to systematise the Scriptures is to classify them into three categories: sambandha, abhidheya and prajojana.

«One's relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, activities in terms of that relationship, and the ultimate goal of life [to develop love of God] — these three subjects are explained in every aphorism of the Vedānta-sūtra, for they form the culmination of the entire Vedānta philosophy.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 7.146).

«Sambandha-jṣāna refers to establishing one's original relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, abhidheya refers to acting according to that constitutional relationship, and prajojana is the ultimate goal of life, which is to develop love of Godhead (premā pum-artha mahān).» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 7.73).

Educators of the modern world developed various educational models through pratyaksha and anumana that were more or less similar to the true state of affairs. Benjamin Bloom was one of these educators who divided education into three spheres: cognitive (learning information), psychomotor (developing skills and abilities) and affective (dealing with emotions and qualities). And from this division emerged the nowadays common division of educational goals and objectives into information, skills, and values; that is, in terms of material topics any education can be related to one of these categories or broken down into components each falling under one of these categories. This is not the only division, but as we can see it correlates quite well with sambandha, abhidheya and prajojana, and it is rather a simplified projection of them on the technical level. In fact, a similar division can be found in ISKCON's first goal written by Śrīla Prabhupāda, although he certainly did not use Bloom's elaborations:

«(1) To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all peoples in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world.» (Purposes of ISKCON, Purpose 1).

This separation ensures that no aspect of the educational program is forgotten; for example, to teach the necessary information and values, but to omit the skills needed to implement them. It also allows ISKCON to construct an educational program that is logically similar to secular education and to facilitate acceptance of ISKCON education by the masses as a recognized institution.

Also, the approach to education is always directed by the goals it is meant to achieve. We talked about it in the description of the principle of spirituality. Śrīla Prabhupāda also emphasized the principles of objectives for our practice:

«If you have no goal... There is example: "Man without any aim is ship without any rudder." So suppose if... Aeroplane is going with a aim to land in some country, but if he goes on simply without any aim, then there will be disaster. ... So without aim, what is the use of practice? Это злупость. That is foolishness. Without goal, practicing something, it is foolishness» (Room Conversation, 13 June, 1974).

Therefore, the formation of a curriculum based on learning objectives is another important aspect of the systematic approach. It identifies an audience for the training, defines its real needs to provide an educational process, and that becomes its objective. The objectives can be in three areas: sambandha, abhidheya, and prajojana.

To simplify this division, we can use the existing division into information, skills, and values, since according to this scheme the system of academic plan development already exists and provides a quality systematization of material knowledge. However, as mentioned above, it is important to understand that this is not an optimal structurization but a kind of simplification of it with inaccuracies. In particular, the distinction is that in the material world not all information leads to a transformation of values, whereas in spiritual science any difference in the understanding of sambandha transforms or deepens the understanding of prajojana. If we forget it, "academic" education emerges in spiritual education, that is, informational education that does not change one's worldview, and it turns education into its quasi-form. Also, sambandha does not include all information, but only that and only that which leads to an understanding of our relationship with the Lord. Also, prajojana is somewhat broader than just values. Therefore, it must be understood that the division into information, skills, and values is an incomplete projection of the division into sambandha, abhidheya, and prajojana. We can use elements of such a planning system, but we cannot simply copy it for ISKCON.

Also, speaking about education of a wider society, it is important to mention that in fact we are extremely conditioned by the experience of the systems in which we were educated as children and young adults. For example, in the years when the author of this book studied at school and

university, education was highly integrated and centralized; that is, all students studied the same curriculum, they had the same academic plan. So, it is difficult for those who were educated according to this system to picture an alternative model. Although, for example, in the 1920s the USSR tried to introduce a model where children could choose their own subjects and complete projects on them. It was seen as a means to bring students closer to practical life. Nowadays this model works successfully in some other countries. However, by 1927 that program was replaced by a universal one with predetermined academic hours for each subject. In 1931-1932 I. V. Stalin was personally involved in the development of a few resolutions on schooling, which introduced a pronounced centralized management, when all activities of educational institutions were integrated and carefully regulated. It played a significant role in the structure of education and the style of teaching to the present day establishing a culture that has not changed in many ways up to this day. Therefore, for example, we often have a subconscious tendency to transfer the same culture of Joseph Vissarionovich to the educational system in our spiritual society.

Mixed schooling is another example. Since ancient times, and even as far back as fifty years from now it was possible to find schools with gender-segregated instruction in the society; boys were taught with boys and girls were taught with girls. But we grew up in a different system which does not consider an appropriate education in this aspect to optimize the structure of the educational process. Therefore, again, we tend to consider this system of education as quite natural.

If to take an outside look at our worldview, although it is quite difficult to do, we can see many different attitudes to the development of the educational system that we brought into the society of devotees from our previous conditioned lives, and not all of them are productive. The most effective way to find undesirable attitudes toward the construction of an educational system is to find evidence from the Scriptures and to observe other more appropriate models of education that already function in our society.

Stages of Bhakti

The canonical path of spiritual education is outlined by Śrīla Rupa Goswami in Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu:

«In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. In the next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Absolute Personality of Godhead. ... So, by the slow process of devotional service, under the



guidance of the bona fide spiritual master, one can attain the highest stage, being freed from all material attachment» (Bhagavad-gita, 4.10).

Although this topic is part of systematicity, it is so vast, that its description would take 1/3 of this book. Therefore its description, essential being part of this book, was made as a separate one. But here we would like to note, that education for us is not a process of acquiring knowledge or developing certain qualities. Those are secondary symptoms. The very essence of education is to help a person to progress on his path from *sradha* to *nistha*. And for that we do require understanding how exactly that is done. What does each stage mean, when does it start and when it transforms into the next stage, as well as what has to be done to the person, while he is on that particular stage of spiritual development.

Common Mistakes in the Principle of Systematicity of Education:

1. not to include God in the picture of the universe, we get an impression that the system works without Him if there is no place for Him in it. It is the same mistake that some scientists make when it comes to comprehending the systematic structure of the world. According to them, material world functions so perfectly that there is no need for the presence of God. Similarly, we can try to create a system and expect it to work perfectly on its own thereby taking the Lord out of its "box". We can create different systems, but we need to understand how the energy of the Lord permeates them and how the effectiveness of any system depends on His will, even it is the best one;
2. to reject or deny, even unconsciously, the laws of the universe. It happens when we do not consider the laws of karma, the three gunas of material nature, etc., when we construct any system and believe that we are above the influence of these laws. An educational system must consider the conditionality of people and the influence of the various laws of the material world on them;
3. to reject the rules of bhakti-yoga. We need to understand that at first our devotional service is regulated, in other words, it is based on the rules and regulations, and that an attempt to perform devotional service in detachment from them or even in opposition to them will not bring us spiritual progress;
4. to create an educational system omitting feedback on how much knowledge is learned through formal or informal assessment of students. One way or another, the providers of knowledge must assess how successfully the recipients of knowledge learn, particularly not only in theory but also in application to their lives;



5. to see exams as an administrative function rather than an educational one, that is, to see the purpose of exams purely as a protective element of the organization. For example, to protect diksha gurus from unqualified disciples, to protect devotees from unqualified teachers, etc. It is an important function, and yet it is secondary to the educational function of exams – to assess the level of knowledge of students in order to adapt the educational program taking into account repetitiveness and progressiveness of education;
6. to move the focus from important truths, as they once become seemingly self-evident, to secondary aspects. It happens when minor details begin to dominate education while greater fundamental aspects begin to dilute in people's minds. The study of the subtler details is possible, but it must always be done in connection with the fundamental aspects, that is, there must be a reminder of the basic principles from which the secondary details emerge, if they are important;
7. to transfer knowledge to unqualified people or, conversely, to deny access to appropriate educational processes to those, who are already prepared for them. For example, the process of caring for others as an educational process for the ones who care for others. And also, the impact of the gunas of passion and ignorance in this aspect, when we either do not help devotees to grow and do not take initiative as seniors or, on the contrary, we take proactive steps but are attached to the fruit, that is, to the pace of their development trying to "pull" them up to the level we want them to reach as quickly as possible. Instead, it is necessary to perform our duty faithfully, yet to do so without attachment;
8. to misunderstand the structure of learning in relation to the stages of bhakti. There may be a great variety of mistakes here, where one or another aspect is forgotten or given prematurely. This topic is covered in a separate book "From Shraddha to Nishtha: Systematizing Spiritual Care", and see also the list of common mistakes in the section "The Steps of Bhakti" above;
9. to study the Scriptures without understanding their integrity and structure. Thus, the Scriptures are only read in order, and readers forget how this or that passage relates to the whole, how it relates to the other parts of the whole. Therefore, it is necessary to present a "bookcase" that is, the structure of the Scriptures;
10. an absence of connections between different aspects of the educational system; at micro level – when a package of classes or courses are not united into a whole, there are no established connections of transition from one course to another, etc.; at the macro level – when there is no connection between different parts of ISKCON. For example, it can occur in the case of desynchronization of the institutions of diksha, siksha, and the administrative management of the organization. And a misunderstanding of how all parts of society serve educational goal of ISKCON in the complete sense of the word (see principles of spirituality, practicality, and continuity);

11. to reject the organizational structure of Krishna consciousness movement, or the predominance of the structure over the idea of the movement, where the structure hinders the development of the movement rather than makes it possible being the skeleton;
12. not to take into account an individual approach but try to unify everything in order to simplify the system. This is discussed in more detail in the principle of individuality, but here it is worth mentioning the aspect when the system does not provide steps for people with a certain adhikar. That is, the chain of sequence of education is broken, when there are educational elements for people who are, supposedly, on the first stage and, supposedly, on the third stage, while there is no education for the corresponding second stage;
13. to misunderstand the connection between the guna of goodness and bhakti when bhakti is replaced by the guna of goodness, or to think that bhakti is dependent on the guna of goodness. Or to reject the importance of the guna of goodness, which really means to be in the gunas of passion and ignorance. Instead, there should be an understanding of the guna of goodness as a favourable environment for the practice of bhakti, because the form of the guna of goodness is the most similar to that of pure goodness;
14. an attempt to assert our conditioning as the optimal culture for ISKCON; a failure to understand that we bring into ISKCON our past culture alien to bhakti. In this case, we need to understand the Lord's will as manifested in the culture through the authoritative sources followed by logic and empirical observation. Not to try to create something of our own but to try to exercise the Lord's will in this world;

For example, if the culture from the Scriptures cannot be applied for one reason or another, then by default devotees may begin to live in the culture to which they were accustomed to before Krishna consciousness. For example, in the society we do not always understand how management and governance worked in the Vedic society. Because devotees are conditioned in different ways, someone might suggest things from outside the Scriptures that they are more used to and think as more suitable to the practice of Krishna consciousness, than what we have in our society as a corporate management culture that certainly has elements of the guna of passion in it. And at that point there is a conflict within the society, some devotees do not accept this alternative because it is not scriptural. But what they may not realize is that they might live according to a much worse culture than the Scriptures. For example, to live without management at all or with management based on the guna of ignorance, and yet to reject management based on the guna of passion on the pretext that it is “not in goodness”.

On the other hand, referring to the principle of yukta-vairagya sometimes devotees try to bring the culture of the outside world into our society without even consulting the Scriptures. It can be particularly detrimental to the society, when such culture is presented as an ideal standard for the entire society. If we have two pots, one dirty, bent and with holes, but known to us (our conditionality) and another one new and better for cooking (scripture

culture), to choose the old pot out of the two is an application of yukta-vairagya (because we associate our conditionality with Krishna consciousness) but not the best application of the principle. In that sense, it is fine to occupy one's own and others' conditionality with yukta-vairagya in order to purify and renounce it in the process, but it is not acceptable to establish it as the optimal standard of the society.

Both approaches described above are not oriented toward a desire to create the most favourable conditions for the practice of bhakti, but toward a war of conditionality in which the arguments of Krishna consciousness philosophy and practice are used as weapons against another kind of conditionality. This is merely an argument of "which dirty pot is better." Actually, each side proposes their conditionality as the best for ISKCON. And one conditionality is usually higher in the combination of gunas than the other, so we should give it credit.

But a devotee who is determined to exercise a culture of goodness in our society first consult the Scriptures and then, if they do not understand how to exercise the culture of the Scriptures in full, they find a way to exercise it with the time, place, and circumstance in mind. What are some of the ways? To observe different cultures in the outside world and to see different patterns in practice and how they reflect the original idea of the Scriptures in order to extract gold even from an "impure place". In this way, by viewing through the lens of the scriptural principles, they construct a similar instrument in our society, as similar in structure as possible to the one associated with the Lord's desire. This is the optimal application of the yukta-vairagya principle.

15. an absence of systematization of educational programs, or simply copying generally accepted forms of systematization of material knowledge (e.g., information-skills-values).



Principle of Individuality

Principle of Individuality

Individuality is another principle of our world. Impersonalists aim to destroy individuality, but devotees understand that individuality exists always and everywhere in the material world as well as in the spiritual world.

«Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be.» (Bhagavad-gita, 2.12).

In the spiritual world, everything has an identity of its own without exception. And even the "dead" material world is permeated with life; at micro-scale the demigods control all aspects, including light and air, and at micro-scale there are almost no places without living beings, even as simple as bacteria. Not to mention the Super Soul, which is present in every single atom and in between. In fact, the entire material world makes sense only because there are jivas with individuality present in it. If there were no living beings in it, it would make no sense.

We may also notice that a jiva fears death not as a fact but as the loss of one's individuality. Therefore, even one who believes that it will be possible to live after death often fears it, because of the false ego one identifies oneself with various relationships in this world and is afraid to lose them. For that person, their relationships, their merits, their experiences in this body are part of their individual nature, which will be lost with the body.

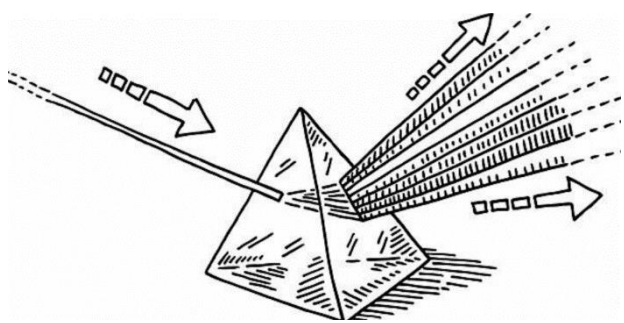
Individuality really implies not only individual consciousness, but also individual will, qualities, and attitudes, which, however, are only truly manifest in our spiritual nature.

«All the residents of Vṛndāvana were overwhelmed with ecstatic love, and they came forward and greeted Śrī Kṛṣṇa according to their individual relationships with Him — some embracing Him, others bowing down to Him, and so forth. The cowherd women presented water mixed with yogurt and unbroken barleycorns as a token of honor, and they showered auspicious benedictions upon Him.» (Shrimad Bhagavatam, 10.25.29).

However, in the material world relationships are based on temporary things and therefore do not remain with us forever. In this sense, a more correct manifestation of the fear of death is the fear to never regain one's true identity.

So, individuality is another principle of existence which manifests itself in its various aspects. It is not within the scope of this book to touch upon the details of the individual relations of eternally liberated living beings, but to look at the manifestation of the aspects of individuality in the material world in regards of the spiritual growth of devotees. In doing so, the principle of individuality of education affects both the platform of spiritual practice and the platform of social context and corresponding material education.

Consideration of time, place, and circumstances



In fact, when it comes to spiritual practice the principle of individualization of education was already described through other principles. For example, the principle of systematicity demonstrated that this or that education should be presented to each student according to their adhikar, and it implies an individualized approach.

The principle of practicality stated the necessity to apply the Scriptures in life, which is also individual. The principle of continuity spoke of yukta-vairagya, and its manifestation is also individual. Actually, the whole principle of living guidance is actually a manifestation of the principle of individualization of spiritual education. Let us recall just a couple of quotes that illustrate it:

«It is the duty of the ācārya, the spiritual master, to find the ways and means for his disciple to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa» (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 2).

«It was the duty of the spiritual master or teacher to observe the psychological movement of a particular boy and thus train him in a particular occupational duty.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.8.36, purport).

So, not to be repetitive we will only talk about a seeming conflict between noncompromising and consideration of time, place, and circumstance that our society often encounters in the effort to individualize education.

For example, we may see sometimes how someone takes statements from the Scriptures but does not understand that many of them must be adjusted to the nature of people and specific circumstances. And one begins to use these statements thoughtlessly, without understanding which one is applicable to certain circumstances and if so, how. The Scriptures provide a general model, which must be individualized by a spiritual teacher, as his qualification is to know the Scriptures as well as to know how to apply them to different people because memorization of spiritual truths as such is not enough.

«We should not follow regulative principles without an effect, nor should we fail to accept the regulative principles. What is required is a special technique according to country, time and candidate. Without the sanction of the spiritual master, we should not try to imitate.» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila, 23.105).

This is what distinguishes fanaticism from a mature understanding of the Scriptures. Fanaticism knows the statements of the shastras, but it does not know how to apply them, and so it always dictates the same way of implementing them in life whether it is appropriate or not. Whereas a mature understanding of the Scriptures provides a vision of how to implement certain scriptural statements differently in different circumstances. For example, above we discussed the principle of unselfishness. And reading the quote about unselfishness of teachers someone might find that the only one realization is that teaching should never involve finances, otherwise it is a symptom of self-interest. Usually, it would lead one to blame other Vaishnavas for violating what one believes to be a learned principle. However, this is a complex matter with many nuances and variations, which we have discussed in the description of the principle of spiritual guidance.

Below there are two famous comments of Śrīla Prabhupāda in which he speaks of the importance of being mindful of the situation around and just how those, who did not understand the application of the Scriptures in Lord Chaitanya's mission, criticized ISKCON

«The method of worship — chanting the mantra and preparing the forms of the Lord — is not stereotyped, nor is it exactly the same everywhere. It is specifically mentioned in this verse that one should take consideration of the time, place and available conveniences. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is going on throughout the entire world, and we also install Deities in different centers. Sometimes our Indian friends, puffed up with concocted notions, criticize, “This has not been done. That has not been done.” But they forget this instruction of Nārada Muni to one of the greatest Vaiṣṇavas, Dhruva Mahārāja. One has to consider the particular time, country and conveniences. What is convenient in India may not be convenient in the Western countries. Those who are not actually in the line of ācāryas, or who personally have no knowledge of how to act in the role of ācārya, unnecessarily criticize the activities of the ISKCON movement in countries outside of India. The fact is that such critics cannot do anything personally to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If someone does go and preach, taking all risks and allowing all considerations for time and place, it might be that there are changes in the manner of worship, but that is not at all faulty according to śāstra. Śrīmad Vīrarāghava Ācārya, an ācārya in the disciplic succession of the Rāmānuja sampradāya, has remarked in his commentary that caṇḍālas, or conditioned souls who are born in lower than śūdra families, can also be initiated according to circumstances. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaiṣṇavas.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.8.54, purport).

«Translation: Seeing that the Māyāvādīs and others were fleeing, Lord Caitanya thought, “I wanted everyone to be immersed in this inundation of love of Godhead, but some of them have escaped. Therefore I shall devise a trick to drown them also.”»

Purport: Here is an important point. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to invent a way to capture the Māyāvādīs and others who did not take interest in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This is the symptom of an ācārya. An ācārya who comes for the service of the Lord cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means by which Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be spread. Sometimes jealous persons criticize the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because it engages equally both boys and girls in distributing love of Godhead. Not knowing that boys and girls in countries like Europe and America mix very freely, these fools and rascals criticize the boys and girls in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for intermingling. But these rascals should consider that one cannot suddenly change a community's social customs. However, since both the boys and the girls are being trained to become preachers, those girls are not ordinary girls but are as good as their brothers who are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, to engage both boys and girls in fully transcendental activities is a policy intended to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. These jealous fools who criticize the intermingling of boys and girls will simply have to be satisfied with their own foolishness because they cannot think of how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by adopting ways and means that are favorable for this purpose. Their stereotyped methods will never help spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, what we are doing is perfect by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, for it is He who proposed to invent a way to capture those who strayed from Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» ("Chaitanya Charitamruta", Adi-lila, 7.31-32).

We need to remember that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself never deviated from the ideals of devotional service and expected his disciples to follow in his and the previous acharyas' footsteps with the same confidence, without compromising either to please the public or out of fear. And to understand that our main goal is to serve Krishna but not the corrupted tastes of conditioned living beings.

«This kind of ad is not good, it is not grave. Our process is to show Krishna Consciousness as it is, not as others want to see it. By showing KC in this way, you are making the thing less important. It is not that we should change to accommodate the public, but that we should change the public to accommodate us. Better you devote your full time to one thing only, not many things. ... If we simply present Krishna Consciousness in a serious and attractive way, without need to resort to fashionable slogans or tricks, that is sufficient. Our unique asset is our purity. No one any where can match it. That will be noticed eventually and appreciated, as long as we do not diminish or neglect the highest standard of purity in performing our routine work, not that we require to display or announce ourselves in very clever ways to get attention. No, our pure standard is enough. Let us stand on that basis.» (SPL to Yogesvara, 28 December, 1971).

«Those who are not following the regulative principles may say and act whatever crazy thing they may do but we must not compromise with our principles. Those who are actually sincere about spiritual life will gradually see the purity of our movement as you are conducting it and they will become attracted to the real thing. Those who want to be cheated do not take the solution even when it is at hand but prefer to be cheated.» (SPL to Sudama, 1 January, 1974).

But in doing so, without deviating a single step from the highest ideals of bhakti, we must adapt our message to the consciousness of an audience and use the words that will not reject sincere people. Thus, on the contrary, it may help them advance on the spiritual path. The point is that we adapt the message to the audience but we do not become dependent on them. Addiction means that to please the audience becomes our goal, and then it inevitably leads to a desire to curry favour with them and their potentially corrupted tastes. To adapt the message, on the other hand, means that we serve the Lord and focus not on whether our audience likes our message but on whether the Lord likes it. It is necessary to adapt it so that the audience can optimally understand and apply it. For example, if we walk down the road and see a person who has fallen into a deep hole, we can come to the hole and try to push him out of it, or we can just have a nice time in it together. Or we can just walk by and say that there is no need to get out of it, he should be fine in it anyway because it is his own predicament. Or we can extend our hand in his direction from a great distance but not enough so that he can grab hold of it. All these options are not likely to be productive. But we can walk up to that hole, secure ourselves from falling into it and reach out our hand so that the person can grab onto it and get out. This analogy can help to some extent to understand the synthesis of noncompromising and consideration of time, place, and circumstance, which can manifest itself in a variety of ways. The key guideline, however, is to understand the necessity of both values in our preaching and education and to test the degree of their manifestation in our actual activity.

Important aspects of understanding Varnashrama

Now we shall talk about the individualization of education with consideration for the individual peculiarities of material bodies of different human beings. Varnashrama is a classic arrangement of a society which takes into account individual characteristics of material bodies, and it always existed in this world, because it is a division created by the Lord in the human society, and therefore it is His integral part. Even when the rules of Varnashrama are not observed, as in present-day Kali Yuga, we can still see how different people have inclinations toward one or another of the four kinds of activities.

«These different orders of society and grades of spiritual advancement are conceived in terms of qualification. It is confirmed in Bhagavad-gītā that the four social orders and the four spiritual orders are created by the Lord Himself in terms of different individual qualities. As the different parts of the body have different types of activities, so the social orders and spiritual orders also have different types of activities in terms of qualification and position.» (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 2).

More importantly, the lifestyle of Varnashrama is a reflection of the life in the spiritual world. To understand it, it is enough to look at the culture of the society system at the time of Krishna's presence on Earth in Vrindavan and Dvaraka and the way He lived with His eternal companions.

Therefore, speaking of the individualization of education, that is, the consideration of the various aspects of a material body in education, first it is worth touching on the topic of Varnashrama.

«*Cātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭam [Bg. 4.13]. Unless in the human society the varṇāśrama system is introduced, no scheme or social order, health order or any order, political order, will be successful.*» (Room Conversation, 18 October, 1977).

Varnashrama implied consideration of people's individual nature related to their material conditionality, and offered them an appropriate path of spiritual advancement accordingly. Therefore, the performance of one's functions as such in a varnashrama society is already an individually designed education according to one's respective nature. However, to be ready to perform one's dharma within a varnashrama system first one must undergo an appropriate education that is individualized according to the role that one would perform within that system in the future.

(Conversations about the teachings of Plato)

«**Śrīla Prabhupada:** Is this educational program for all men, or are there different types of education for different men?

Disciple: No, this is for everyone.

Śrīla Prabhupada: This is not very good. If a boy is intelligent and inclined to philosophy and theology, why should he be forced to undergo military training? ... We disagree that everyone should go through the same training. The spiritual master should judge the tendency or disposition of the student at the start of his education. He should be able to see whether a boy is fit for military training, administration, or philosophy, and then he should fully train the boy according to his particular tendency. The spiritual master should be expert enough to recognize the tendencies of the student and immediately train him in that line. This is perfect education. *(Conversation about Plato).*

First, let us talk about the varnas. The nature of brahmanas and kshatriyas was determined by their qualities, while that of vaishyas and sudras was determined by their propensity for the respective activities. It is important to note here that a brahmana is defined by qualities, not by a propensity for one activity or another, such as teaching others, as one might think. That is, a propensity to teach and so forth does not characterize a person as a brahmana, but teaching is a function that can be performed by individuals with appropriate brahmanical qualifications, and are usually more inclined to perform them. But just as everything orange is not an orange, so not all people with the propensity to teach are brahmanas by nature.

«*Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness – these are the natural qualities by which the brāhmaṇas work. Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership are the natural qualities of work for the kṣatriyas. Farming, cow protection and business are the natural work for the vaiśyas, and for the śūdras there are labor and service to others.*» (Bhagavad Gita, 18.42-44)

Over time in India, as we know, varnashrama-dharma distorted into a caste system. Those who were not born into an eligible family were not given a chance to engage in the relevant activities. This idea, if viewed through the lens of the Scriptures rather than through the lens of liberal

conditioning, actually seems quite logical, after all in varnashrama-dharma there was a science to determine what kind of body a child would have when a certain man and woman were married. So, it was possible to determine through parents what a child would be like.

In fact, the point is that according to the combination of the parents' nature and upbringing in the early years of life, appropriate nature manifested in the child. If the parents' nature was matched in the right way, the child's nature did not "fall" down, and the child was qualified for an appropriate education. If the combination was not perfect, the child's nature's downfall was minor. But when the mother and father's natures were strongly incompatible, the child received mixed qualities that could contradict each other; for example, a propensity for brahmanical activity could be combined with a desire to exploit others. A complete mixture of different kinds of human nature is the complexity of people in Kali Yuga; it looks they are a random mix of various aspects of different varnas. And these combinations often do not match each other as if a fair amount of salt added to a sweet cake. Although it would appear to be the same cake but added salt makes it unusable. When a cake is made up of many non-matching ingredients, that is the Kali Yuga people. That is why in Kali Yuga they are below varnashrama, though they may even have the qualities of the highest class and therefore consider themselves brahmanas or at least kshatriyas.

However, this approach of defining varna by birth disregarded two important aspects. The first was that one became a brahmana not by birth but by the appropriate education he was qualified for because of such birth. Without undergoing it or demonstrating oneself in it properly, one remained at the level of a sudra.

«Prabhupada: No, no. Take "everyone is rascal," then train them. That is wanted. Take everyone as rascal. There is no question that "Here is intelligent man, here is rascal, here is the..." No. First of all take them all rascals, and then train them. That is wanted. That is wanted now.» (Conversation, October 16, 1975).

«The social institution known as varṇāśrama-dharma—the institution dividing society into four divisions of social life and four occupational divisions or castes—is not meant to divide human society according to birth. Such divisions are in terms of educational qualifications» (Bhagavad-gita, 16.1-3).

However, India's social order ceased to take it into account and began to pay attention only to the aspect of birth and not to education. Thus, unqualified persons when married produced even more unqualified children, and so on down the generations. This mistake was the mechanism for a gradual degradation of the varnashrama. It would not have been so critical if it had had a reverse mechanism to bring it back to the correct state, but that mechanism was also broken. The second aspect was that varnashrama-dharma no longer considered that through devotional service one could rise above one's conditioned nature and become qualified for an appropriate education.

«To say nothing of the spiritual advancement of persons who see the Supreme Person face to face, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately becomes eligible to perform Vedic

sacrifices if he once utters the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or chants about Him, hears about His pastimes, offers Him obeisances or even remembers Him.» (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.33.6).

«Prabhupāda: No, prārabdha can be changed.

Indian man (2): Prārabdha-karma...

Prabhupāda: Yes, yes. I am replying you. Prārabdha can be changed» (Lecture, 28 November, 1972).

«Prabhupada: ... And of course, in our country everything was taken by birth. Now it is going on. But even by birth one is low-grade...

Governor: No, birth also was built up by a tradition. They were brought up in that atmosphere.

Prabhupada: Yes. It doesn't matter. But if he wants to be elevated, he should be given chance. That is the verdict of all sastras.» (Conversation, 20 April, 1975).

Omitting this moment, the so-called varnashrama society lost an opportunity to revive the original society, because the mechanism of a person's elevation, which already allowed a person to become a qualified individual in present life, was lost. So, the mechanism to elevate a society was lost, while the mechanism of its degradation worked in full force, and that resulted in a caste system; and we are to witness the remnants of it.

Improper relationship between the varnas was the third aspect of the degradation of varnashrama society, as it was contaminated by the impurities of the lower gunas. People developed an improper approach towards respect of members of other varnas. Thus, each person ceased to respect the activities of those, who were lower than them in terms of varna, and became jealous of those, who held a higher position. That came from the understanding that one position was better than another. However, this is a totally wrong approach and it was not embedded in the original varnashrama society because "higher" does not mean "better."

«The Vedic system does not condemn anyone. "You are a potter. Oh, you are lower." No. You are as good as a priest because you are doing your duty. That's all right. Never condemns. This is development of later age when the so-called brāhmaṇas became, I mean to say, treacherous. They began to condemn so-called lower class. There was disruption, the whole social system. But in the beginning it was not. So they have got respectable terms. Just like a brāhmaṇa is addressed as paṇḍita mahārāja. A kṣatriya is addressed ṭhākura saheb, ṭhākur. And a merchant is addressed: sethji. And the laborer class addressed as choudhdhari, means leader. In this way everyone has got respectable position. Why? Because the test of their success was one, Viṣṇu. Success... sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhim vindati mānavaḥ [Bg. 18.46]. "{By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading} a man can attain perfection through performing his own work."] Whatever your occupation may be, that doesn't matter. But if you worship the Supreme Lord by your occupation, then you are successful» (Room conversation, July 16, 1968).

Devotees also may not be free from this tendency toward a materialistic vision, and so in some parts of our society we may notice a mentality which subconsciously or even consciously consider the word "sudra" abusive or insulting. In fact, sudras are ordinary people. That is, if we look at a society of people, even those who follow varnashrama, there are a few people among them who stand out more, but it only means that sudras by default constitute the majority of people in a society, and they are just ordinary, "normal" people.

«It is not caste system. It is division of labor. It is not caste system. A class of men must be intelligent, a class of men must be strong to give protection. And a class of men must be to produce food, and a class of men, general worker.» (Conversation, 16 October, 1976).

«Jagadīśa: Are the majority of citizens śūdras? In a varṇāśrama society?

Prabhupāda: Yes. The number of śūdras are always bigger. Just like in university education. The, the number of graduates and post-graduates, they're less. Others are big, number bigger.» ((Morning walk, 12 March, 1974).

Of course, in Kali Yuga, not many people would like to think of themselves as ordinary people. But that is the point, and yet from a material point of view most people are ordinary people. It is impossible for everyone in a society to be brahmanas and kshatriyas when a majority of the society are sudras, it is an impossible paradox. Here it is important to understand that from the spiritual point of view every jiva is unique and equally important to Krishna, so material ordinariness should not embarrass us.

And certainly not many people would like to identify themselves as sudras by reading the following Śrīla Prabhupāda's sayings:

«Those who have no brain—simply they can carry out order—they are sudras.» (Conversation, 1 August, 1975).

«Prabhupada: Let them become sudra. Let them become servant. After all, unless he works, he cannot get his food. So let him become servant. He has to work to get food. No property. He should not be given any property. If you work, you can get food. Just like animal.» (Conversation, 16 October, 1975).

However, it is a false perception of Śrīla Prabhupāda's attitude towards sudras. Regarding respect for all varnas individuals, who are good in arts and physical body work, are important to the society for its successful functioning, and consequently, their service is required by Krishna, so they are respected for that. A head cannot consider a foot as a useless part of a body and therefore neglect it, if the head has a mind and understands that they are both parts of one body. This whole problem originated because society's head already lost its mind, and therefore such disrespect occurred.

«Prabhupāda: Yes, harmonious coordination. But the śūdras were hated like anything, and they became Mohammedans.» (Conversation, 20 April, 1975).

«Prabhupāda: Ah. They're Vaiṣṇava. But because they have got to live in the material world, there must be division of work. If everyone wants to become the brain, who will act as leg? That is also required. If everyone says, "No, no, I'm not going to do the work of leg. I want simply to work as..." No. It is needed. The brain is needed, the hand is needed, the belly is needed, the leg is needed» (14 March, 1974).

But as far as envy is concerned those people, who are not free from the desire for sensual pleasures, may see from a purely material point of view that life of a higher class is "more pleasant", and therefore, out of envy they may want to perform those duties but in fact they are not qualified to do so. But the question is not about what kind of life one has, but about the fact that one's conditionality already has a program of purification within that conditionality. Trying to take another person's place is like drinking a strong-acting medicine prescribed to another person just because it is sweeter than our medicine, even though we have completely different sickness.

«It is far better to discharge one's prescribed duties, even though faultily, than another's duties perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, for to follow another's path is dangerous.» ("Bhagavad-gita", 3.35).

Another concern may be that other classes would exploit sudras, who serve them. It is important to note here that the essence of exploitation is not that sudras serve others, as that is their role, but that in return they are not adequately cared for. Though it is certainly true for modern society, it is not the case in a genuine varnashrama society:

«Prabhupada: Oh yes, that is ksatriya. If one does not obey the social structure, he must be forced...The sudras who do not work properly, he must be forced. Nobody should remain unemployed. The sudras are inclined. If he has got something to eat, he will not work. You see? Then again he will work when his need, eating. This is sudra mentality.

Bhagavan: So they have to be kept employed.

Prabhupada: Yes. They have to be... They should not possess, so that they will work always.

Yogesvara: Yeah, but that was exactly the situation that sparked the Communist revolution. When the workers felt themselves exploited, then they revolted.

Prabhupada: No, workers, what is that? Exploited?

Yogesvara: Yes, when the sudras were seeing that, "Oh, these men, they are keeping us as slaves, and they are making us work just for our food," then they revolted.

Prabhupada: No, no. You should keep them such nicely and friendly way, they will never think like that. They will think that you are giving him food and shelter, and you are taking care, giving them protection to their family. Then they will be happy. Then they are happy. When you give them all protection, then they will be happy. ... If you are assured of your food, shelter, and necessities of life, then you will never grudge. That was the system.» (Walk, 27 May, 1974).

The question of the attitude towards sudras has been addressed here in such detail to counterbalance the mundane conditionality according to which social diversity leads to social

inequality. It leads people driven by the guna of passion to desire to climb as close to the top of the social pyramid as possible and to reject what they consider to be less significant steps, or to try to erase all differences and thus to "level" everyone. Both dynamics must be eradicated from our society, if we are to establish varnashrama.

Varnashrama and ISKCON

Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly had a desire to manifest varnashrama, he had been talking about it constantly since 1974. One might think that Śrīla Prabhupāda had no such intention in the beginning. But we can see by his actions that from the very first years Śrīla Prabhupāda began to establish ashrams in the community of devotees. In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself established a part of vānashrama, namely three ashrams: brahmachari, grihastha and sannyasi, because there was simply nobody to become a vanaprastha at that time. He also succeeded in manifesting one varna, the brahmanas, by establishing their training. It was that particular varna which he wanted to manifest because it is the head of the society:



«So I think this is, this system is very scientific so that if you want help of a really intelligent man or God realized man, it is ready, the brāhmaṇa class. Just like if you require the help of a lawyer, we have got so many lawyers. If you require the help of medical man... Because there are trained men. Similarly, the society requires to train a certain class of men to become brāhmaṇas. Just like we are training the Kṛṣṇa conscious. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness is meant for the brāhmaṇas. They are not meant for fighting because they are not being trained for fighting. They have been trained for becoming brāhmaṇas.» (Lecture, 27 March, 1969).

The other four aspects of varnashrama - vanaprastha, kshatriya, vaishya and sudra – have not yet manifested distinctly in our movement. It is caused by several difficulties, and we have already talked about one of them. It is the perception of varnashrama as a society of the inequality of the classes which is common even among devotees, although the equality of a society lies in the fact that every person within varnashrama society is just as perfect as those of the other ashrams by properly performing their duty in the service to the Lord:

«By following his qualities of work, every man can become perfect. Now please hear from Me how this can be done. By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, a man can attain perfection through performing his own work.» (Bhagavad Gita, 18.45-46).

Another difficulty in perceiving varnashrama comes from the fact that although the system itself is one, it must be applied differently to each category of people:

1. for devotees who are completely liberated from the influence of material energy;
2. for devotees who are to some extent liberated from the influence of material energy;
3. for devotees who are still affected by the influence of material energy;
4. for non-devotees who encounter the society of devotees.

An attempt to unify the system, in other words to forget that individual approach is the main characteristic of varnashrama, makes it impossible to implement it. Therefore, now we will talk about all four audiences and present what Śrīla Prabhupāda said about the manifestation of varnāshrama culture for each of them.

For devotees who are completely liberated from the influence of material energy.

As mentioned above, devotional service transforms human nature. Not only do qualities change over time but even predisposition to some activity can change. The quote below from one of the talks on varnashrama demonstrates that, although Śrīla Prabhupāda's sentences are incomplete and therefore the thought is not in its complete form:

«Prabhupada: No, inclination can be changed also. If one has got little ad... But we should take little advantage of the inclination. Not that... That is to be decided by the... Inclination or no inclination, we can... That will be done. That is not very difficult.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that individuals, who are beyond the gunas of material nature, can safely perform any duty in a perfect way, so they completely independent of varnashrama.

«However, when one transcends the modes of material nature and is fully situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can perform anything and everything under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master. In that complete stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the kṣatriya may act as a brāhmaṇa, or a brāhmaṇa may act as a kṣatriya. In the transcendental stage, the distinctions of the material world do not apply. For example, Viśvāmitra was originally a kṣatriya, but later on he acted as a brāhmaṇa, whereas Paraśurāma was a brāhmaṇa but later on he acted as a kṣatriya.» («Бхагавад-гита», 3.35).

«But Mahārāja Pṛthu, although situated in the transcendental position of a pure devotee, came down to the position of brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya for the benefit of human society and thus gave protection to the entire world by his personal prowess. Although he was a king, a kṣatriya, because he was a Vaiṣṇava he was also a brāhmaṇa. As a brāhmaṇa he could give proper instruction to the citizens, and as a kṣatriya he could rightly give protection to all of them.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.21.52).

But they show others how to act by their example, and thereby they can take on any kind of service:

«Prabhupāda: We are simply giving the ideas. We are not going to be a śūdra. But to show the... Just like you play in a drama. You are playing the part of a king. You are not a king.

Hari-śauri: No.

Prabhupāda: So similarly, just to give them idea, we have to play like that» (Conversation, 14 February, 1977).

«But to show the people that we are not escaping, we can take part in any order of life. That is our position. Just like if I brush somebody's shoes, that does not mean I am shoemaker. My position is the same. But to show how to do it... Just like a servant is doing. The master is, "Oh, you cannot do. Just see." Just like I show you sometimes how to mop. So I am not a mopper, but I am showing how to mop. So our position is like that. We do not belong to any varna and asrama. But we have to show these rascals.» (14 March, 1974).

Such devotees are beyond varnashrama in every sense, but since there are different services to Krishna, they render them. There is no problem for them to do the service, they do what is necessary for the society and for Krishna's satisfaction.

«Just like Kṛṣṇa is Viṣṇu, He's not human being, but He was acting like human being, similarly, Vaiṣṇava is transcendental. But for proper management of the material world, one should be acting like brāhmaṇa, one should be acting like kṣatriya. That is required. Just like actually we are doing so. Some of you are preaching, and some of you are cleansing the temple. It does not mean that a sannyāsī who is preaching, he is better than that man who is cleansing. The... Their position as Vaiṣṇava is the same. But for the management, one is cleansing, one is seeing the construction, one is going to preach, like that. That should be there. It is not that "Because I have taken sannyāsa, therefore I cannot any more do any thing." If need be, he has to act as kṣatriya. Or a śūdra. It doesn't matter.» (Conversation, 12 March, 1974).

To render the best service to Krishna is a fundamental principle for such devotees. And since they can perform any kind of service, they will do everything necessary. Guided by the principle of the importance and relevance of activity for the society of devotees they can do at this moment, they set an example to the others how to act in a varnashrama society.

«Pancadravida: The brahmanas, they all become devotee... They would all be engaged in devotional life as...

Prabhupada: This is also devotion, to teach a ksatriya, because this is necessary in the society. This is also devotion. ... So everything for the service. If Krsna is pleased being pierced by the arrow the devotee will do that. His only business is how to please Krsna» (Walk, 20 April, 1974).

For devotees who are to some extent liberated from the influence of material energy.

These devotees are also superior to varnashrama. They have already developed necessary qualities of brahmanas. But they may yet retain their conditioned nature – a predisposition to one activity or another, which they can engage for the better service to the Lord.

It is important to note that the transformation of qualities may happen faster than the change in predisposition to a certain activity, when we talk about the change of prarabdha-karma through devotional service. For example, a devotee already exhibits all the qualities of a brahmana, and yet they still have a predisposition for physical labour or management. It is more difficult for them to do a service that is not in their nature.

When a particle of faith, by good fortune is born and one thinks of becoming a Vaishnava and serving the Lord, the materialistic aspect becomes slightly spiritualized (gandha) and the jiva becomes qualified for devotional service. At the stage of sadhu sanga, the spiritualization becomes more condensed and his material attachments are atyantiki. At the stage of anishthita bhajana kriya, the spiritualization of I and mine is specific, localized in one place, whereas the material aspect is still in full force (purna).

At the stage of nistha, spiritualization becomes detectable in many places, and the materialistic influence is still prominent (prayiki). At the stage of ruchi, spiritualization of I and mine becomes dominant, nearing completion (prayiki) and the materialistic concept of I and mine becomes localized in certain issues. At the stage of asakti, the spiritual aspect of I and mine becomes complete (purna) and the material aspect becomes a trace (gandha). («Madhurya kadambini», chapter 8).

So, at nistha level a devotee already develops the qualities of a brahmana, but their material body still has its own nature, and it should be taken into account. Śrīla Prabhupāda continues in the same quote about liberated Vaishnavas mentioned earlier:

«For example, Viśvāmitra was originally a kṣatriya, but later on he acted as a brāhmaṇa, whereas Paraśurāma was a brāhmaṇa but later on he acted as a kṣatriya. Being transcendently situated, they could do so; but as long as one is on the material platform, he must perform his duties according to the modes of material nature. At the same time, he must have a full sense of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» («Бхагавад-гита», 3.35).

The idea here is still the same – to serve Krishna as best as possible. Therefore, if at any time more service is required in the society that does not suit the nature of a devotee, one will take it up realizing that there is a need for it, and so one can serve the Lord better. However, if there are others in the society, who are better suited to perform these duties, that person will pass it on to them and engage in activities that correspond to one's own quota.

«Ātreya-ṛṣi: So in our Movement, the leaders must decide how every devotee and every resource is engaged properly.

Prabhupāda: *That is leadership. That is leadership: Which man is fitted for which work.»*
(Conversation, 12 March, 1974).

For such devotees, nature is certainly taken into account, but it is not the most important indicator that assigns to them one or another activity appropriate to their nature.

And activities of a sudra who follows all spiritual practices do not make such a Vaishnava inferior to one who is engaged in brahmanical activities. One may think that the one who is engaged in some brahmanical activity is better out of the two equally developed devotees-Vaishnava. Or even, for example, to think that brahmanical initiation is meant only for those devotees who are engaged in brahmanical activities and the rest do not need it. But this is a false vision:

«Pancadraviḍa: *A śūdra, if he is working, he cannot take brāhmaṇa initiation, but he can take hari-nāma, is that it?*

Prabhupāda: *... A devotee, because he is working as a śūdra, he is not a śūdra; neither he is a brāhmaṇa. He is already in the spiritual platform. But for management we have to do that. One can do the śūdra's work nicely—let him be engaged in that way. Why he should imitate?*

Mahāṁsa: *Does he get second initiation?*

Prabhupāda: *Everything he will get.*

Mahāṁsa: *He gets.*

Prabhupāda: *Yes. Second initiation means recognized: "Now he has become fully competent Vaiṣṇava. (Morning Walk, 20 April, 1974)*

Hence, the second initiation in our society means that one possesses the appropriate qualities of a Vaishnava (including brahmanical qualities, and therefore it is brahmanical initiation). It is a confirmation that a devotee has really established oneself on a spiritual platform and follows all the practices qualitatively, but not that one is engaged specifically in brahmanical activities and therefore "only that person deserves the second initiation". This matter is discussed in more detail in the book "From Shraddha to Nishtha" which was recommended earlier.

A false division of the service into "lower" or "higher" comes from the material concept:

«That should be the aim, how the society will go on nicely. And for management, this hand, leg, brain, belly must be divided. Just like there's slight difference, those who are directly engaged in temple worship and those who are going to sell books. Apparently there's difference, but basically there is no difference. Like that. If one can sell books nicely, why he should be, I mean to say, engaged in the temple worship? He can do better work in that way. But there is no difference between selling the books and temple worship. Or washing the dish. There's no difference, because it is all transcendental.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

We have learned from Bhagavad-gītā that preaching is more important than all other services. However, it must be understood that it does not only refer directly to preachers. Between two devotees when one serves Lord Chaitanya's mission, and the other does not, the one who serves the

mission is dearer to the Lord. But serving the mission does not mean only direct preaching. Anything that supports the mission of preaching is also a service to the mission:

«Madhudvisa: He says: "Those who repeat this message of Bhagavad-gītā, are most dear friends to me, and there's no one more dear to Me than he..."

Prabhupada: Hm.

Madhudvisa: Wouldn't that indicate that a preacher is higher than a worker?

Prabhupada: Yes, this is preaching, this is preaching. You help. Suppose you are preaching, and if I help you... Just like I'm preaching, you're helping. You are also preaching.

Atreya Rsi: Also this building is preaching.

Prabhupada: This is also preaching. So it is not that preaching means simply talking. Preaching means everything. The construction is also preaching. The designing is also preaching. Everything is... Otherwise what is the use of spending so much money if it is not preaching? ... In our society every work is transcendental: for preaching. Every work. But one must be engaged with some work.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

The preacher is usually given more respect, not because he is busy preaching and therefore better than others, but in order to keep the society focused on the importance of preaching. This is similar to a soccer team, when forwards score a goal but the whole team works. Now people's vision is distorted, they only notice an immediate cause of the goal, and so the most famous and honourable players are usually the forwards. But the point is precisely to see the importance of everyone's service and to emphasize the key role of the goal, not because the forwards play a more important role, but because the players should not think that their business is simply to run around the field with a ball.

On several occasions Śrīla Prabhupāda himself gave a wonderful analogy of a railroad company to emphasize this point:

«There was an advertisement by the railroad department, their monogram was a wheel of carriage and they have written that every employee of the railroad should see that the wheel is running on. Wheel is running on. Now suppose in the office the clerks are working, so how they will see the wheel is running on? Because in the office of railway there is some complaint, there is some claim, there so many things... But that is depending on their wheel. So they should expedite their business so that wheel may not stop, it must go on. It is very nice instruction. So the wheel is going on.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

Therefore, qualified devotees are superior to varnashrama regardless of the activity they are engaged in, and their equal quality of service to the mission of Lord Chaitanya is equally valuable. However, for the highest quality of the service to the Lord it is taken into account, though a predisposition to one or another activity is not considered the main criterion of the type of performed service. And from a social perspective, such Vaishnavas usually play a role appropriate to the varna of their occupation. However, it is important to understand that it is more of a stage play in which different Vaishnavas play given roles but do not to identify themselves or other Vaishnavas with those roles, understanding their spiritual superiority over the plan of human social interaction.

For devotees who are still affected by the influence of material energy.

In addition to the previous categories of devotees, there are also those, who come into the society for the sake of devotional service, that is, who have gained true shraddha but are not yet ready to follow the standards of a devotional life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda started our society with training devotees in brahmanical way of life and teaching his disciples the way of paramahansa. Everyone was following the same path, but even in Śrīla Prabhupāda's lifetime it was obvious that not everyone was immediately ready to follow the appropriate way of life, and hence there were falls:

«Prabhupāda: So the varṇāśrama-dharma should be introduced all over the world, and...

Satsvarūpa: Introduced starting with ISKCON community?

Prabhupāda: Yes. Yes. Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriyas. There must be regular education.

Hari-śauri: But in our community, if the..., being as we're training up as Vaiṣṇavas...

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Hari-śauri: ...then how will we be able to make divisions in our society?

Prabhupāda: Vaiṣṇava is not so easy. The varṇāśrama-dharma should be established to become a Hari-śauri: No, it's not a cheap thing.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Therefore this should be made. Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava, is not so easy. If Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava is so easy, why so many fall down, fall down? It is not easy. The sannyāsa is for the highest qualified brāhmaṇa. And simply by dressing like a Vaiṣṇava, that is... fall down.

...

Satsvarūpa: In our ISKCON, one becomes a brāhmaṇa after a year. It's not very hard. Everyone becomes a brāhmaṇa.

Prabhupāda: That is due to chanting. That lift very easily.

Hari-śauri: Where will we introduce the varṇāśrama system, then?

Prabhupāda: In our society, amongst our members..

Hari-śauri: But then if everybody's being raised to the brahminical platform...

Prabhupāda: Not everybody. Why you are misunderstanding? Varṇāśrama, not everybody brāhmaṇa.

Hari-śauri: No, but in our society practically everyone is being raised to that platform. So then one might ask what is...

Prabhupāda: That is... Everybody is being raised, but they're falling down.» (Room Conversation, 14 February, 1977)

We stated that the previous categories of Vaishnavas are beyond varnashrama. Novice devotees are also already outside varnashrama in the sense that any devotee is superior to a brahmana because the ultimate spiritual realization of brahmanas is the Absolute Truth in its Paramatma aspect, whereas Vaishnavas already worship the Lord in His supreme Personality aspect.

Nevertheless, there is still a problem of strong conditionality for aspiring Vaishnavas that they are to overcome:

«Satsvarūpa: Today you've been saying that the Vaiṣṇava is the highest, above the brāhmaṇa. But then we've also understood that everyone in ISKCON is a Vaiṣṇava.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Vaiṣṇava everyone, even if he's not brāhmaṇa. Jīvera svarūpa haya nitya-kṛṣṇa-dāsa [Cc. Madhya 20.108-109]. But you have to gradually bring him to that pure consciousness that "I am servant of Kṛṣṇa." Here the bodily conception is going on, "I am American," "I am Indian," "I am this," "I am that."» (Room Conversation, 14 February, 1977)

We should understand that one is a Vaishnava by their values and by their as yet unrealized worldview, but they may not yet have appropriate qualifications in terms of their conduct and their demonstration of the Vaishnava worldview in life:

«Satsvarūpa: If in our society we say, "Śrīla Prabhupāda wants some to be sūdra..."

Prabhupāda: No, no, no. I don't want. I want everyone to become Vaiṣṇava. But because he's a sūdra, it is not possible to bring him immediately to the platform of brāhmaṇa, or Vaiṣṇava. Therefore falling down. Therefore system must be. But even if he remains a sūdra, he's a Vaiṣṇava.» (Room Conversation, 14 February, 1977)

We know that Śrīla Prabhupāda followed Lord Chaitanya and advised people to stay in their position, not to change anything but add to it chanting the Holy Name and the performance of other direct āngas of devotional service. However, it is important to note that the development of a society is wrong, when there is no division into varnas in the society for such aspiring Vaishnavas.

«Satsvarūpa: But if they won't chant, then neither will they train up in the varṇāśrama. That's the easiest.

Prabhupāda: The chanting will be there, but you cannot expect that people will chant like Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They cannot even chant sixteen rounds. (And) these rascals are going to be Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Satsvarūpa: No. But if they at least will chant and take some prasāda...

Prabhupāda: Chanting will go on. That is not stopped. But at the same time the varṇāśrama-dharma must be established to make the way easy.

Hari-śauri: Well, at least my own understanding was that the chanting was introduced in the age of Kali because varṇāśrama is not possible.

Prabhupāda: Because it will cleanse the mind. Chanting will not stop.

Hari-śauri: So therefore the chanting was introduced to replace all of the systems of varṇāśrama and like that.

Prabhupāda: Yes, it can replace, but who is going to replace it? The... People are not so advanced. If you imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura to chant, it is not possible.

Satsvarūpa: We tell them go on with your job but chant also.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Thākaha āpanāra kāja, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Āpanāra kāja ki. Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommended, sthāne sthitaḥ. And if they do not remain in the sthāna, then the sahajiyā's chanting will come.» (Room Conversation, 14 February, 1977).

Since the manifestation of sahajiyā is not obvious, let us examine the logic of its manifestation. A person comes into the society of devotees and their years of practice may be going on, yet their lifestyle may still not meet the standards of a Vaishnava life. As a result, many people may develop a kind of duplicity when a person, who is not ready for some intense practice, begins to follow it for the sake of status. For example, a devotee has been serving Krishna successfully for a long time but they cannot give up some habits. At the same time, they are expected to lead, they should already be a brahmana because everyone in society is trained to be a brahmana and lead a proper lifestyle. Status is assigned, but they do not follow some things according to that status. So, the duplicity, i.e., sahajiyā, begins. Instead of allowing a person to remain in their conditions and serve the Lord according to their current adhikar to gradually purify themselves, social pressure pushes them into such duplicitous conduct that will be detrimental both to them and to the society. In this way, the expectations of a society destroy it.

In particular, it happens because of a certain substitution in the mind, when it is believed that a person, who does not follow a higher level of practice, should still take it up and by following it they will "reach" an appropriate level, even they are not ready for it. They may or may not reach it. Of course, for the sake of the mission it can be done, we know that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a sannyasi service to many people with understanding in advance that many of them would fall. But these are rather extraordinary circumstances, which Śrīla Prabhupāda himself abandoned more and more in the last years of his life and set more serious requirements for such service because he understood that it would violate the principle of systematicity. Instead, devotees should be offered the level of practice and lifestyle that suits them. And if they constantly and appropriately follow the prescribed level of practice, they will gradually ascend and eventually attain perfection. At the same time the practice must be set up for elevation not for staying on the same level forever. That is, we should give a person a ladder to climb and position them on an appropriate step but not to send them to a step above their level or give them a chair instead of a ladder.

«Prabhupāda: Not that a sūdra man is by force become a brāhmaṇa. You cannot improve. That is not possible. But even if he remains a sūdra and does accordingly, he will get the same position as devotee. Sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya sam... [Bg. 18.46]. He'll get the perfection. At the present moment the idea is: if one remains a sūdra, then he cannot get perfection. No. Even a sūdra can get perfection provided he does the work of a sūdra perfectly.» (Room Conversation, 14 February, 1977).

When Śrīla Prabhupāda explained these points to devotees, they often felt that that meant a radical restructuring of ISKCON society, a "revolution" in its structure. But the manifestation of varnashrama does not cancel the system that already exists; everything that already exists can continue to work as it is, it simply needs expansion to offer an appropriate way of life and service to everyone according to their adhikar:

«Hari-śauri: So we'd have to completely revise the whole system that we have now.

Prabhupāda: No. Whatever we have, that is all right. But we see by experience that they're falling down. There must be systematic. Why falling down? Because he was not fit for the position, therefore he has fallen. Better remain in his position and become perfect. Why artificially bring them? There is no need.» (Room Conversation, 14 February, 1977).

The problem in our society is that we look at diksha, sannyasa, a position of diksha guru or any leadership role as a status, and a conditioned nature of a living being often seeks to attain a higher status. From an external point of view this is true, but it is more a consequence of their internal or inherent characteristic:

«So the purificatory process is necessary for reaching this point of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, sannyāsa, or any purificatory process, is to help reach the ultimate goal of becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious, without which everything is considered a failure.» (Bg, 3.5).

All these are not status but purification processes and forms of the service to the Lord which a devotee takes upon themselves according to their willingness to follow them. It is not a status, but a burden of love for the Lord. Why take on a burden for which you are not ready, and by taking it likely to harm yourself or someone else? Therefore, it is important for every devotee to understand what kind of service in the devotional society they are best suited for and to do it, as the Scriptures explain, not on their own but a spiritual teacher is to do it (not necessarily a diksha guru, of course).

For non-devotees who encounter the society of devotees.

There are people, who come into contact with our society and appreciate the qualities of devotees and different aspects of their lifestyle, but are not ready in their minds to accept the concept of devotional service to the Lord.

We see that only a few become devotees as a result of our preaching. But if we want to eventually lead the whole society to devotional service rather than an extremely narrow section of the population, varnashrama is necessary for a broader society.

«Satsvarūpa: But in most of our temples, the duties are either Deity worship, brāhmaṇa...

Prabhupāda: Brāhmaṇas are available. Why you are bothering about this? Brāhmaṇas are also available, śūdras are also available. Why śūdra should be artificially become a brāhmaṇa?

Satsvarūpa: What will the śūdras do in the big city temple, in all the temples?

Prabhupāda: Why you are bringing our temples? I am talking of the principle.

Satsvarūpa: Oh.

Hari-śauri: The principle we follow. We're just thinking how it can be implemented. You were saying that it should be started in our society.

Prabhupāda: Yes, that is a very broad idea. Now we are speaking of some of them, training them. That is another thing. That is small scale.

Hari-śauri: The principle we're following.

Prabhupāda: Yes. In the... For the big scale, this is the required. In big scale you cannot make all of them as brāhmaṇas or sannyāsīs. No. That is not possible. This is a small scale. How many percentage of people of the world we are controlling? Very insignificant. But if you want to make the whole human society perfect, then this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should be introduced according to the Kṛṣṇa's instruction, if you want to do it in a large scale for the benefit of the whole human society. Now we are picking up some of them, best. That is another thing.» (Room Conversation, 14 February, 1977).

Devotees will naturally play the role of a leader in this society, since only they will be qualified to play the role of brahmanas. Thus, the whole society, even composed of non-devotees, will be led by devotees. Now all over the world, the leaders of the society are individuals who are demonic in their qualities from the point of view of Śrīmad Bhagavatam. And so, the whole society is moving in the wrong direction. But Vaishnava's construction of a social culture will spiritualize all its participants, even non-devotees of the Lord can fit in.

Such a properly structured society will help them gradually elevate to the level of devotion to the Lord:

«Prabhupada: So unless they are trained up, so the society's already in chaos, and it will go on still more in chaos, chaos. It will be hell. How people will live? And these rascals are being elected as government men, and they're only making budget how to tax. So one side, there is no rain; one side, there is no rice, especially in India; and one side, heavy tax. So they'll be all confused. They have already become confused. So in the confusion state it will be very difficult to make them Kṛṣṇa conscious. Therefore preliminary help should be given.

Visnujana: Preliminary.

Prabhupada: Yes. That they should not be in chaos and confusion. Otherwise, how the brain will work?

Visnujana: Yes. No one can give rapt attention without peace of mind.

Prabhupada: Yes, yes. Our main aim is how to give them Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But if they are already disturbed in every respect, then how they'll take it? Therefore we are taking these subjects, to help him to come to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And this is the method—varnashrama.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

So, we have talked about the connection of varnashrama to different categories of participants in the human society. Although it does not yet give a clear idea of the tactical implementation of varnashrama, but at least such understanding of its relation to ISKCON gives an idea of the purpose of varnashrama, and what the meaning its application may have for different categories of its participants.

Material Science and ISKCON

There was based on the Vedas comprehensive education of the higher classes in Vedic society, so that they could influence society in terms of the social and applied aspects of the material sphere of life.



«For advanced education there are various kinds of books of knowledge, such as the four Vedas, their six supplements, the Vedanta-sutra, books of logic, books of religiosity and the Puranas. So all together there are fourteen divisions of books of education. Of these, the book which presents adhyatma-vidya, spiritual knowledge—in particular, the Vedanta-sutra—represents Kṛṣṇa» (Bhagavad-gita, 10.32).

«The Vedas are the storehouse of knowledge, both material and spiritual. But such knowledge aims at perfection of self-realization. In other words, the Vedas are the guides for the civilized man in every respect. Since human life is the opportunity to get free from all material miseries, it is properly guided by the knowledge of the Vedas, in the matters of both material needs and spiritual salvation. The specific intelligent class of men who were devoted particularly to the knowledge of the Vedas were called the vipras, or the graduates of the Vedic knowledge. There are different branches of knowledge in the Vedas, of which astrology and pathology are two important branches necessary for the common man. So the intelligent men, generally known as the brahmanas, took up all the different branches of Vedic knowledge to guide society. Even the department of military education (Dhanur-veda) was also taken up by such intelligent men, and the vipras were also teachers of this section of knowledge, as were Dronacarya, Kṛpacarya, etc.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.12.29).

That education began with the study of Sanskrit because it provided access to a thorough understanding of the Scriptures. Also, as another feature of Sanskrit, comprehensiveness enabled the students to exercise their brains.

«Anyone serious about studying the Sanskrit language should first learn grammar. It is said that simply to finish studying Sanskrit grammar takes at least twelve years, but once one learns the grammatical rules and regulations very nicely, all other Scriptures or subject matters in Sanskrit are extremely easy to understand, for Sanskrit grammar is the gateway to education. (Bhagavad-gita, 15.5)

«It is a great center for learning Sanskrit. So he finished his education in Sanskrit grammar, specifically, he was a great scholar in Sanskrit grammar. According to Vedic system, the students are first of all taught the Sanskrit grammar, because it is very difficult subject. Usually one has to study grammar for 12 years, and when one is very much conversant with grammatical rules, he can read any literature. That means after studying grammar, the door is open for any other subject matter, just like philosophy, medicine, then military art, there are so many Vedic knowledges. Generally they read literature, the Puranas, the Vedantas and saipa[?], saipa[?] means general literature» (Conversation, 11 March, 1972).

However, it is important to mention that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not consider Sanskrit as a matter of principle. He certainly encouraged devotees to study Sanskrit, and he wanted ISKCON to have experts in Sanskrit, but nevertheless, the study of Sanskrit was still of secondary importance. For example, here is what Śrīla Prabhupāda says about it in his discussion of the educational program of the Varnāshrama College in ISKCON:

«*Hridayananda: Would the brahmanas learn Sanskrit?*

Prabhupada: Eh? Not necessarily.

Hridayananda: Not necessarily. Just more philosophy.

Prabhupada: Just like I am translating all the books, similarly, any book of knowledge can be translated into different languages. Not that one has to learn Sanskrit.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

So, in Vedic society, brahmanas from their childhood were admitted to a gurukula, where they studied Sanskrit for eleven years, that is, up to the age of sixteen. At the same time, they learned various applied skills. Then, after learning Sanskrit they were given access to various areas of knowledge, both spiritual and social.

There was also a training program for kshatriyas that included gurukula, but the amount of knowledge there was smaller. Vaishyas and sudras were taught simple things related to their future activities:

«*Prabhupada: No, their attention should be in chanting. And produce their own food, agriculture. And as soon as they get English education, then... Not "as soon as," but not all of them are fit for being educated. It is not possible. They are sudra class of men. What he will be educated? Sudra, vaisya, they should learn how to plow, how to produce food. They are thinking otherwise, that "Plowing is great labor. If we educate our boys in English, they can go to the city. Immediately they get some..."*

Tamala Krsna: "Get more money, work less."

Prabhupada: Yes. Actually it is not the position, but they're thinking like that. Everyone wants to work less and get more money. That is Marshall's theory of economic impetus» (Conversation, 18 February, 1977).

All the others acquired the knowledge simply by listening to brahmanas who taught how to apply it in practice, brahmanas simply taught how to act. And the training was very simple:

«*Actually only brāhmaṇas, they require education, or all others, they will simply see and learn. So little education required—that you can learn by hearing only, that's all. Suppose a brāhmaṇa class says that "This is good; this is bad." So you hear and accept. It doesn't require to go to school and college. So education will be simplified. It has become very much complicated» (Conversation, 11 January, 1977).*

It took place in a brahmachari's ashram. The grihastha ashram as well as the other ashrams were not meant for that purpose; there were no weekend trainings that one had to go to in order to improve one's skills.

Boys, as well as girls, were primarily taught chastity. However, this quality manifested itself in their lives in different ways. Thus, boys were taught brahmacharya, that is, to control sexual desires:

«During student life the brahmacaris were given full instructions about the importance of the human form of life. Thus the basic education was designed to encourage the student in becoming free from family encumbrances. Only students unable to accept such a vow in life were allowed to go home and marry a suitable wife. Otherwise, the student would remain a permanent brahmachari, observing complete abstinence from sex life for his whole life. It all depended on the quality of the student's training» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.12.42).

And for girls' chastity assumed the following form:

«To render service to the husband, to be always favorably disposed toward the husband, to be equally well disposed toward the husband's relatives and friends, and to follow the vows of the husband—these are the four principles to be followed by women described as chaste. ... A woman's education should be conducted along the lines indicated in this verse. The basic principle for a chaste woman is to be always favorably disposed toward her husband» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 7.11.25).

«Prabhupāda: This is psychology. If woman is chaste, even though she is not very beautiful, she will be liked by the husband. So train them in that way: very chaste, faithful wife and knows how to cook very nicely. Other qualification, even they haven't, that's all right. And Kṛṣṇa consciousness is being trained up. Then there will be no difficulty. And boys should be first-class man. Then our Gurukula will be successful. What do you think? Am I right?» (Morning walk, 10 July, 1975, Chicago).

If you expected that there would be a long list of different aspects of education in varnashrama, you would be disappointed; this is the general description of the system of education in the Vedic society. You can see that the education was a very simple and clear system: all children were taught chastity, women, Sudras and Vaisyas were taught simple skills for their usual activities; and kshatriyas and brahmanas were taught various arts and sciences so that they in turn would simply guide the rest of the society in the right direction. Simplicity did not mean inferiority, if the elements were properly arranged, all the complex social mechanisms worked successfully on their own. It is just like a mechanical watch, though there is a complex mechanism of many gears and other parts inside, externally the only way to operate it is to wind it by twisting the knob.

Modern education of the broader society has evolved into a much more complex system that educates people in only one aspect among a multitude – technical and academic education – without

addressing any other social aspect at all. Thus, in fact the whole society produces only sudras, albeit extremely sophisticated ones.

«The whole of India is now under technological instruction which means to become sudras. Just like a carpenter can manufacture so much nice furniture by his technological education, but in our Vedic society, the carpenter is considered a sudra. Similarly a tannery expert was called a cobbler. So these things are now lost. Everyone is prepared to become a cobbler, a carpenter, a chemist, a physicist, an electrician and so many other things, but they do not know that after such education one has to depend on other's mercy. So-called highly qualified technologists cannot earn their livelihood without getting a suitable job. It is just like a dog, however stout and strong it may be, it cannot be happy without having gotten a wealthy master. Without being protected by a wealthy master it is nothing but a street dog and he is never happy. So all the students at the present moment are getting educated how to become first class sudras» (SPL to Niranjana, May 21, 1973).

Śrīla Prabhupāda regularly explained that we are not against material education, we just should use it in Krishna consciousness:

«We don't say that you should not become advanced in material education. You may, but at the same time you should become Krsna conscious. That is our message. We don't say that you shouldn't manufacture motorcars. No. We say, "All right, you have manufactured these motorcars. Now employ them in Krsna's service." That is our proposal. So education is required, but if it is simply materialistic--if it is devoid of Krsna consciousness--it is very, very dangerous. That is the teaching of the Ishopanisad.» («The Laws of Nature: An Infallible Justice," compiled from lectures and SrimadBhagavatam purports by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada».).

«This does not mean that human civilization should revert to animal life or that the human being should live naked in the jungles without any culture, education and sense of morality. An intelligent human cannot live the life of an animal; rather, man should try to utilize his intelligence in arts and science, poetry and philosophy. In such a way he can further the progressive march of human civilization. But here the idea given by Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī is that the reserve energy of human life, which is far superior to that of animals, should simply be utilized for self-realization. Advancement of human civilization must be towards the goal of establishing our lost relationship with God, which is not possible in any form of life other than the human» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.2.4).

However, did Śrīla Prabhupāda see the value of such education, and did he want the education of children in our society to be structured in the same way? If one looks at the various instructions that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave in regards of the education of children, it is obvious that the answer to this question is strongly negative. Even many serious ISKCON followers who were born and raised in the Western world would find it hard to accept his words and would be tempted to make some

justification of it. For example, here is his letter on how to structure education in one of the gurukulas of that time:

«All the children should learn to read and write very nicely, and a little mathematics, so that they will be able to read our books. Cooking, sewing, things like that do not require schooling, they are learned simply by association. There is no question of academic education for either boys or girls—simply a little mathematics and being able to read and write well, that's all, no universities. Their higher education they will get from our books, and other things they will get from experience, like preaching, SKP, etc. Alongside the regular classes in reading and writing, the other routine programs they should also participate in, like arati, kirtana, preaching, Sankirtana, like that.» (Letter, 16 February, 1972).

It may be difficult for someone to reconcile in their mind the above letter and the quote that we are not against education. It was not quite clear to the disciples either, so they asked Śrīla Prabhupāda about this aspect during one of their talks:

«[The dialogue is in the framework of a conversation about what to teach in our varnashrama colleges]

Prabhupada: *That, as it is suitable. It is not that because the ksatriyas were killing by bows and arrows formerly, you have to continue that. That is another foolishness. If you have got... If you can kill easily by guns, take that gun. Just like formerly, parivraja, Caitanya Mahaprabhu walked on the street. There was no aeroplane or... Or he did not use it. Does it mean that I shall have to follow that? I must take the jet engine. If it is available. If somebody criticizes, "Oh, Caitanya Mahaprabhu walked on leg and you are traveling in the jet plane?" Shall I have to take that ideal? These are rascaldom. When you have to work, you have to work with the greatest facility. That's all. Now I have got the facility of the talking in microphone, and... So why should I not take it? It will be recorded. It will be heard by so many others. I am speaking to four, five men. It can be heard by a big crowd of four hundred men.*

Visnujana: *So we should perpetuate this technical skill of...*

Prabhupada: *No. We are not going to... But if somebody's interested doing, so we take it, make the best use of it.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).*

If anyone is willing, let them obtain a sophisticated technical education. We will use its fruits as necessary in the service to Krishna, but we will not waste our life time on it, and instead, we may use it for spiritual progress.

As for the material sciences that Śrīla Prabhupāda proposed to teach in our society we will not go into detail here, since this book is not a textbook on how to establish varnashrama, but will quote a couple of dialogues that show his general attitude toward various aspects of such education:

«Hayagrīva: *All right. Arithmetic should be taught?*

Prabhupāda: *Arithmetic? Yes. That is necessary.*

Hayagrīva: What about any history? World history or American history or American literature or English literature?

Prabhupāda: American history. That's all. They are Americans. They should learn American history. Don't bother much.

Hayagrīva: Any Indian history?

Prabhupāda: Indian history, that... Bhāgavata is all right.

Hayagrīva: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam?

Prabhupāda: That Kurukṣetra battle. That's all. And there are many other stories in the Bhāgavatam. They are all historical.

Hayagrīva: What about literatures? When they get older, of course. This would be for when they are older.

Prabhupāda: Literature, we have got so many. Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavata.

Hayagrīva: Any English literature, American literature, English literature?

Prabhupāda: Yes. Any... Some of the English literature, recognized.

Hayagrīva: Any of the sciences at all?

Prabhupāda: I don't think we require any science. What do you think?

Hayagrīva: Biology?

Kīrtanānanda: No.

Hayagrīva: Geology, zoology, astronomy.

Prabhupāda: Biology, you can teach them the evolution of the species from Padma-Purāṇa, 8,400,000's, one after another. Yes.

Hayagrīva: What about astronomy? Anything like that? No. Okay. Any animal husbandry they can learn out there. Animal husbandry they will learn...

Prabhupāda: That they will learn practically, cow keeping.

Hayagrīva: At what age should they be taught to cook prasādam?

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Hayagrīva: At what age should they be taught to cook?

Prabhupāda: After twelve years.

Hayagrīva: After twelve. And you think they can be taught typing, for instance? A skill like typing and how to use typewriter?

Prabhupāda: Does it require all? Well, just this knowledge is required.

Hayagrīva: And you suggested... I have it written down somewhere. You suggested a certain number of hours for their school, about five hours or four hours a day.

Prabhupāda: Three hours in the morning, two hours in the evening. That's all. Not at a stretch. Morning, evening. And in the noon they should take their prasādam, take little rest» (Conversation, 24 December, 1969).

«*Hrdayananda:* And there should... Should there be any material subject matters taught like in gurukula?

Prabhupada: Yes. Just like material subject matter, ksatriya, or the brahmanas, ksatriya, as they are described in the Bhagavad-gita, what are the symptoms of brahmanaa, what is the symptoms of ksatriya. The ksatriyas should be taught how to fight also. There will be military training. There will be training how to kill.

Hrdayananda: Oh.

Prabhupada: Yes. And vaisyas should be trained how to give protection to the cows, how to till the field and grow food. Practical.

Nitai: Not business also?

Prabhupada: Eh?

Nitai: The vaisyas?

Prabhupada: Business, this rascal business, no.

Nitai: No?

Prabhupada: Business means if you have got extra grains or extra foodstuff, you can sell where there is necessity, there is want. That is business. We are not going to open mills and factories and... No. We are not going to do that. That is sudra business. The real business is that you produce enough food grains, as much as possible, and you eat and distribute. That's all. This is business. He does not require any so high technical education. Anyone can till the ground and grow food. Is it difficult? This is the business.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

Overall, one can see from this text that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to retain a minimal aspect of the existing culture of modern society in our education. However, one may get an impression that such education in the varnashrama colleges is extremely narrow: supposedly, the only thing that to be taught there is how to milk cows and add up numbers not exceeding ten. Of course, it is a misconception. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to avoid a distorted culture by the guna of passion, but he was not going to make devotees completely illiterate, which would be the guna of ignorance. The forty-fifth chapter of the book Krishna the Supreme Personality of God is very interesting in this regard, and it describes what sciences Krishna and Balarama were taught. After all, their training in Sandipani Muni's gurukula was exemplary. It was to set an example that being Personalities of the Lord they accepted a spiritual teacher and were taught by him. It is interesting to note that although the Tenth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam does not give a detailed description of all aspects of their training, Śrīla Prabhupāda described them thoroughly. Let us read them carefully:

«It is customary, after being initiated in the Gāyatrī mantra, for one to live away from home for some time under the care of the ācārya, to be trained in spiritual life. During this period, one has to work under the spiritual master as an ordinary menial servant. There are many rules and regulations for a brahmacārī living under the care of an ācārya, and Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma strictly followed those regulative principles while living under the instruction of their spiritual master, Sāndīpani Muni, who was a resident of Avantipura, in the northern Indian district of Ujjain. According to scriptural injunctions, a spiritual master should be respected and regarded on an equal level with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma exactly followed those principles with great devotion and underwent the regulations of brahmacarya. Thus They satisfied Their spiritual master, who instructed Them in Vedic knowledge. Being very satisfied, Sāndīpani Muni instructed Them in all the intricacies of Vedic wisdom and in supplementary literatures such as the Upaniṣads. Because Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma happened to be kṣatriyas, They were specifically trained in military science, politics and ethics. Politics includes such departments of knowledge as how to make peace, how to fight, how to pacify, how to divide and rule and how to give shelter. All these items were fully explained and instructed to Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. ... After hearing only once from Their teacher, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma

learned all the arts and sciences. In sixty-four days and sixty-four nights, They learned all the necessary arts and sciences required in human society. During the daytime They took lessons on a subject from the teacher, and by nightfall They were expert in that department of knowledge..

First of all They learned how to sing, how to compose songs and how to recognize the different tunes; They learned the favorable and unfavorable accents and meters, how to sing different kinds of rhythms and melodies, and how to follow them by beating different kinds of drums. They learned how to dance to the rhythm of melody and different songs. They learned how to write dramas, and They learned the various types of painting, from simple village arts up to the highest perfectional stage. They also learned how to paint tilaka on the face by making different kinds of dots on the forehead and cheeks. Then They learned the art of making paintings on the floor with a liquid paste of rice and flour; such paintings are very popular at auspicious ceremonies performed at household affairs or in the temple. They learned how to make a resting place with flowers and how to decorate clothing and limbs with colorful paintings. They also learned how to set valuable jewels in ornaments. They learned the art of ringing waterpots. Waterpots are filled with water to a certain measurement so that as one beats on the pots, different tones are produced, and when the pots are beaten together they produce a melodious sound. They also learned how to splash water in the rivers or lakes while taking a bath among friends. They learned how to decorate with flowers. This art of decorating can still be seen in various temples of Vṛndāvana during the summer season. It is called phulla-bāḍī. The dais, the throne, the walls and the ceiling are all fully decorated, and a small, aromatic fountain of flowers is fixed in the center. Because of these floral decorations, the people, fatigued from the heat of the summer, become refreshed.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma learned the art of dressing hair in various styles and fixing a helmet in different positions on the head. They also learned how to set up a theatrical stage, how to decorate dramatic actors with costumes and with flower ornaments over the ear, and how to sprinkle sandalwood pulp and water to produce a nice fragrance. They also learned the art of performing magical feats. Within the magical field there is an art called bahu-rūpī, by which a person dresses himself in such a way that when he approaches a friend he cannot be recognized. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma also learned how to make various syrups and beverages required at various times, having various tastes and intoxicating effects. They also learned different types of sewing and embroidery work, as well as how to manipulate thin threads for dancing puppets. This art includes how to string wires on musical instruments, such as the vīṇā, sitar, esarāja and tamboura, to produce melodious sounds. Then They learned how to make and solve riddles. They learned the art of how even a dull student can very quickly learn the alphabet and read books. Then They learned how to rehearse and act out a drama. They also studied the art of solving crossword puzzles, filling up the missing spaces and making complete words.

They also learned how to draw and read pictographic literature. In some countries in the world, pictographic literature is still current. A story is represented by pictures; for instance, a man and house are pictured to represent a man going home. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma also learned the art of architecture – how to construct residential buildings. They learned to recognize valuable

jewels by studying their luster and colors. Then They learned the art of placing jewels in a gold and silver setting so that they look very beautiful. They also learned how to study soil to find minerals. This study of soil is now a greatly specialized science, but formerly it was common knowledge even for the ordinary man. They learned to study herbs and plants to discover how they would act as medicine for different ailments. By studying the different species of plants, They learned how to crossbreed plants and trees and get different types of fruits. They learned how to train and engage rams and cocks in fighting for sport. They then learned how to teach parrots to speak and to answer the questions of human beings.

They learned practical psychology – how to influence another’s mind and thus induce another to act according to one’s own desire. Sometimes this is called hypnotism. They learned how to wash hair, dye it different colors and curl it in different ways. They learned the art of telling what is written in someone’s book without actually seeing it. They learned to tell what is contained in another’s fist. Sometimes children imitate this art, although not very accurately. One child keeps something within his fist and asks his friend, “Can you tell what is within?” and the friend gives some suggestion, although he actually cannot tell. But there is an art by which one can understand and actually tell what is held within the fist.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma learned how to speak and understand the languages of various countries. Not only did They learn the languages of human beings; Kṛṣṇa could also speak even with animals and birds. Evidence of this is found in the Vaiṣṇava literature compiled by the Gosvāmīs. Then They learned how to make carriages and airplanes from flowers. It is said in the Rāmāyaṇa that after defeating Rāvaṇa, Rāmacandra was carried from Laṅkā to Bhārata-varṣa on a plane of flowers, called a puṣpa-ratha. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma then learned the art of foretelling events by seeing signs. In a book called Khanara-vacana, the various types of signs and omens are described. If when one is going out one sees someone with a bucket full of water, that is a very good sign. But if one sees someone with an empty bucket, it is not a good sign. Similarly, if one sees a cow being milked alongside its calf, it is a good sign. The result of understanding these signs is that one can foretell events, and Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma learned the science. They also learned the art of composing mātṛkā. A mātṛkā is like a crossword box, with three numbers in each row. If one adds any three from any side, it will come to nine. The mātṛkās are of different kinds and for different purposes.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma learned the art of cutting valuable stones such as diamonds, and They also learned the art of questioning and answering by immediately composing poetry within the mind. They learned the science of the action and reaction of physical combinations and permutations. They learned the art of a psychiatrist, who can understand the psychic movements of another person. They learned how to satisfy one’s desires. Desires are very difficult to fulfill; but if one desires something which is unreasonable and can never be fulfilled, the desire can be subdued and satisfied, and that is an art. By this art one can also subdue sex impulses when they are aroused, as they are even in brahmacārī life. By this art one can make even an enemy one’s friend or transfer the direct action of a physical element to other things.».

It may not be obvious why learning to draw on the floor with rice flour or to play music with water pots is necessary. But if we step back from a specific form and look at the essence of learning, we can see that in Sandipani Muni's gurukula it was extremely versatile. A modern educational concept assumes the existence of “universal learning activities”. It means that no matter what one learns, in the process one also learns other more fundamental skills and values. For example, a student may study chemistry as a subject, but during the course a student will learn an ability to analyse and synthesize new knowledge; establish cause-and-effect connections; prove judgments; formulate a problem and find a way to solve it; start a dialogue and conduct it taking into account the specifics of communication with different groups of people; set goals; plan their achievement; and so on. That is, although a student studies chemistry, its study is only one of the goals (and often secondary), in fact, at this moment they learn universal educational activities and chemistry is only a reason to learn them.

Similarly, in the description of Sandipani Muni's gurukula, one can see how Krishna and Balarama were trained in many different aspects of life, which on closer look included (this is not a complete list, something may have been missed):

1. working on the development of one's own body;
2. training in the necessary technical skills - manual, engineering, and architectural;
3. practical skills of everyday life;
4. cultural aspects of a healthy social life in the guna of goodness;
5. relations with other children;
6. handling of emotions, mind, psychology - both personal and other people's;
7. working on speech, languages, and writing of the highest order (e.g., writing poetry in Sanskrit);
8. development of aesthetics and visual thinking;
9. fundamentals of the social structure of a healthy society;
10. development of intellectual and analytical skills;
11. applied sciences (e.g., medicine, geology, chemistry); and
12. subtle skills, inaccessible to ordinary senses, but related to mystical perfection;

Isn't it an amazing and extremely comprehensive approach to education, as opposed to the school curriculum we have today?

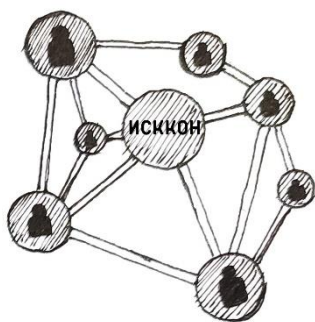
From the description of this section one can get a rough idea of Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision of the varnashrama colleges he wanted to establish.

In connection with this subject, it is worth noting an extremely important aspect - varnashrama colleges are primarily designed to educate children, a younger generation. It is a strategic approach to the development of our society. Of course, adult devotees can be educated as well, but varnashrama colleges that Śrīla Prabhupāda talked about were primarily for children, not for adults; we will talk more about that below.

And the last point to note here is the distinction between art and science. So, for example, music can be studied as art, and it can be studied as science. Sudras's training is confined to the study of art, while training of the brahmanas is the study of science.

On the current social structure of ISKCON

This subsection might be beyond the scope of the subject and style of the rest of the book, and the author apologizes for that. It is more subjective and applied to the current tasks for ISKCON, but because of the importance of the subject the author could not help but include it in this book.



In fact, from a social point of view, living in the city in the existing social environment we, even as devotees, settle for a life of sudras subordinate to people who think atheistically because the whole social system is designed for that. Srimad Bhagavatam does not at all paint a rosy picture of such a future:

«As the earth thus becomes crowded with a corrupt population, whoever among any of the social classes shows himself to be the strongest will gain political power. Losing their wives and properties to such avaricious and merciless rulers, who will behave no better than ordinary thieves, the citizens will flee to the mountains and forests.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 12.2.7-8).

That's why Śrīla Prabhupāda repeated that prediction, when he said that if ISKCON has its farms, then one day millions of ordinary, common people will come to us, which aligns perfectly with the above description of the varnashrama system for the broader society:

«Ramesvara: I remember another thing that Śrīla Prabhupada told me during that time that is very important. He talked about the coming of unemployment in the Kali-yuga. We're seeing this now and this is 2009, almost 2010. It's a bad economic time. But Prabhupada was talking that as the Kali-yuga progresses, more and more there will be unemployment. Prabhupada said we must be ready to take these unemployed people into our movement on our farms. Prabhupada said that we need farm communities that can grow food. He predicted that, "One day millions of people would be coming to our Hare Krishna farms because they are unemployed. And we must accept them. We must feed them. We must let them live there and they will gradually become spiritualized. We will put them to work, they will get their food and there will be prasadam. They will hear something about Krishna and they will gradually by the millions become devotees.» (Śrīla Prabhupada Memories," disc 50; original conversation can be found in the conversation on January 11, 1977.).

In Kali Yuga, however, the opposite picture of life awaits devotees as well in case, instead of creating their own social structure, they live by the rules of the existing social structure. Already now devotees in many countries cannot afford to socialize with other devotees because all their activities during the day are related to making their living. This is why they need to adapt and move to

impersonal online education, minimize their attendance of programs, and so on. ISKCON does its best to adapt to it, but we must understand that in the future life of people of modern civilization will not get better, and at some point it will become impossible to adapt to it.

If we look at the social structure of ISKCON society during Śrīla Prabhupāda's time, there were predominantly people who were willing to live in buses for years for Śrīla Prabhupāda even as grihasthas with small children, go to a new town and open a centre on donations and perform many other acts to serve the mission. Because of Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual strength and the profound devotion of his disciples, it was possible, and farms were easily established where devotees moved to live in tents in the middle of the mountains to build there a community over time. And in general, there were very few people who had a career outside the community. Now we have a very different situation: most of the devotees are family people who work for someone within the demonic civilization. There are also a small number of Vaishnavas who run their own businesses, i.e., they play a role of Vaishyas, distorted by the gunas of the demonic civilization (see Śrīla Prabhupāda's quote above). Even such activities as scientific research, teaching, and the army have been "sudraised". That is, although it looks like a kshatriya and brahmana's activity but in fact, the various fundamental key principles of it have been removed, and so it is still the same sudra's activity.

Therefore, nowadays ISKCON as a society has virtually no internal socium of its own. The spiritual structure of the society - mentorship, education, spiritual fellowship groups, missionary activities, and so on - is all generally in place. However, there are virtually no mechanisms for social interaction between Vaishnavas. There are a small number of brahmanas functioning within our society, such as sannyasis. A rudimentary institution of kshatriyas, or rulers and protectors, is slowly taking shape. There are also a small number of devotees who provide social services to other Vaishnavas. Of course, there are more advanced communities, but for many communities this is the end of the list of their social institutions.

All varnas have somehow to support themselves in a grihastha ashram. However, we do not have support of brahmanas that society normally provides, we have virtually no farms that would provide funds for vaishyas, we have virtually no jobs for people to live in Vaishnava society and thereby support themselves, instead of working for a broader society. And because of all this, there is also no place for kshatriyas to express themselves. Therefore, the only socially oriented ashram by its nature must accommodate it by manifesting its social position outside the devotional society.

We have spoken about supporting brahmanas in the principle of selflessness of living leadership. But the second objective is to create a business to involve devotees in and thereby give them a means to earn their living.

The most natural environment for it is a structure completely independent of the city, which Śrīla Prabhupāda actively created during his time on the planet. The difficulty is that people, and devotees as well including the author of this book, are used to a certain level of comfort, and therefore it is extremely difficult for them to give it up for such an endeavour, thus it leads the society itself to the absence of an internal market:

«Prabhupada: Yes. This poverty. Why there is poverty? Because they are not producing food. Everyone wants so-called comfortable life. So-called education. Sitting idle in the table and chair, and talking all gossips, nonsense, and sleeping. They have been trained up in this way, sudra» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

Also, ISKCON experiences a total lack of agricultural knowledge. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda said that it is enough to work four hours a day for three months a year and thereby provide food for an entire year, due to the lack of relevant knowledge such a move from the city to the countryside becomes an extremely difficult "battle" of a hard everyday life.

In that sense, for those who are attracted to Krishna consciousness, yukta-vairagya mentioned in the principle of continuity of education is quite a workable option: not to change anything but bring Krishna consciousness into one's life.

«Satsvarupa: But sometimes, because this materialistic society is so far advanced, you say we cannot actually hope to change it.

Prabhupada: No, no. That is a fact. We cannot hope to change. But we request everyone to chant Hare Krsna.

Yogesvara: In their factory or wherever they are.

Prabhupada: Yes. Because it is very difficult to close the factory. That is not possible. So whatever you have done, it is all right. But you chant Hare Krsna. Then things will be adjusted. We are giving chance to everyone, who is degraded or who is not degraded, by the simple method of chanting Hare Krsna. We do not neglect anyone. We do not say, "You are neglected. We don't accept you." No. I accept you and I accept others» (Walk, 25 May, 1974).

But when it comes to the perspective of the development of the society those, who are ready, should think about establishing a society that is built not on the connection of the social order of chandals with Krishna consciousness but on the development of a social order that is co-oriented with Krishna consciousness.

«Yogesvara: So then we should begin our rural communities like New Vrindaban, and then by training up people in the cities, we can send them gradually...

Prabhupada: There will be no city. We don't want cities.

Bhagavan: What about our city temples?

Prabhupada: No, no. For the time it may go on. But as we make progress, there will be no necessity» (Walk, 27 May, 1974).

From the beginning a person engages their attachments in Krishna consciousness. It gradually purifies one from them and enables one to live a simpler life, i.e., to change one's culture.

«Bhagavan: But my question is, if the community produces... Some class of men produce vegetables and grains, some class produce cows, some class produce clothes, some class produce necessities for building. How are these things distributed equally?

Prabhupada: Because we are community, we shall distribute whatever necessity for everyone.

Bhagavan: They will come and say, "I need this much cloth, I need this much milk."

Prabhupada: No, this much cloth... But if you become Krsna conscious, then you will be satisfied with the minimum necessities of life. That is natural. You won't demand.

Yogesvara: So actually such a program can only be successful proportionately with the rise of Krsna consciousness of the people.

Prabhupada: Yes. That is the main basic principle. Without being Krsna conscious, if you arrange like this, that will never be successful.

Yogesvara: They won't be satisfied.

Prabhupada: No.» (Walk, 27 May, 1974).

Of course, for devotees the point is not to live on this planet, but to simplify their life in order to conserve energy for the direct angas of devotional service.

«Prabhupada: No luxuries. Live very simple life and you save time for chanting Hare Krsna.

Hamsaduta: Yes, Prabhupada.

Prabhupada: That is my desire. Don't waste time for bodily comforts. You have got this body. You have to eat something. You have to cover yourself. So produce your own food and produce your own cloth. Don't waste time for luxury, and chant Hare Krsna. This is success of life. In this way organize as far as possible, either in Ceylon or in Czechoslovakia, wherever... Save time. Chant Hare Krsna. Don't be allured by the machine civilization» (Conversation, 8 October, 1977.).

Sometimes varnashrama is associated purely with the life on Earth, but it is important to remember first that there were cities in varnashrama, for example, Dwaraka or Ayodhya. And secondly, it is worth considering Śrīla Prabhupāda's definition of varnashrama in Bhagavad-gita, 2.31:

«Human civilization begins from the stage of varṇāśrama-dharma, or specific duties in terms of the specific modes of nature of the body obtained.».

In the conditions of Kali Yuga our body is influenced by the gunas in the way that is not typical of varnashrama society, and it creates various perverted combinations; so, varnashrama must take this influence into account. If one's body is conditioned to an urban life by the influence of the gunas of nature, it may be difficult for people to immediately transition to a land-based life. Therefore, in addition to establishing various settlements it is important for devotees, who live in cities, on the one hand, to learn how to connect properly their social activities with devotional service (see the principle of permanence of education). On the other hand, it is essential to develop a social component of interaction with each other to establish a "marketplace" for the exchange of goods and services among devotees. Understanding the need to develop social interaction among devotees in the urban environment is one step toward the manifestation of varnashrama in our society.

Here is an example. Sometimes devotees assume that services in Vaishnava society should be free of charge or at a lower cost. And it is true in terms of selfless consciousness to serve each other,

but there is a double-edged sword here as well because selflessness must be on both sides, otherwise it only encourages a spirit of consumption and "parasitizing" on others. But it is also important to understand the crucial need for Vaishnava social enterprises that can provide jobs for devotees. Vaishnava society must support such initiatives, if it is to advance beyond the social structure of the asuras. Therefore, these kinds of ventures should be supported when done properly under the healthy guidance of spiritually mature Vaishnavas (a prerequisite), and one should be prepared to pay more money for the services and goods than for similar ones from outside of the social structure. Also, mindful of the need to engage the fruits of their activities in the service to the Lord, grihasthas need to make donations in the guna of goodness; that is, to support the brahmanical structure of ISKCON society that is engaged in preaching transcendental knowledge among non-devotees as well as among devotees. Even if it is not 50% of one's income, as Śrīla Prabhupāda suggested; it should be a percentage that one can afford considering very low incomes of the Kali-yuga society.

And thirdly, living in the city devotees need to gradually learn the culture of simple living in order to gradually eliminate everything superfluous from their life that creates additional difficulties in our spiritual life.

«Another feature of the devotee is nirīhayā, simple living. Nirīhā means “gentle,” “meek” or “simple.” A devotee should not live very gorgeously and imitate a materialistic person. Plain living and high thinking are recommended for a devotee. He should accept only so much as he needs to keep the material body fit for the execution of devotional service. He should not eat or sleep more than is required. Simply eating for living, and not living for eating, and sleeping only six to seven hours a day are principles to be followed by devotees.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.22.24).

However, it is important to remember what yukta-vairagya principle said: everyone's conditionality and their level of necessary material comfort must be handled individually; there is no general standard to be used here.

Thus, if settlements of devotees come into existence and develop, devotees in cities see their responsibilities in connection with devotional service and social interaction with each other, and a simpler way of life gradually develops, then society will have a chance to establish a social structure independent of the wider society.

Tactical aspects of the manifestation of varnashrama

This section is a direct continuation of the previous one, and therefore, it is also subjective and practical in nature.

The most important tactical point is to educate Vaishnavas through chanting the holy name and other forms of direct devotional service. From the social point of view, in this way there will be those who can play the role of brahmanas and to lead the society. Besides the fact that bhakti is incomparable to dharma in its importance, but we know that Śrīla Prabhupāda started with creating

the "head" of the society even from the point of dharma, and this aspect must not be lost, we must keep it in mind.

«Reporter (2): Are you attempting to form a college?»

Prabhupāda: Yes, that is my next attempt, that we shall educate according to classification. First-class, second-class, third-class, up to fourth-class. And then fifth-class, sixth-class, that is automatically there. So first-class men, there must be, at least in the society, an ideal class of men, and that is one who is trained up for controlling the mind, controlling the senses, very clean, truthful, tolerant, simplicity, full of knowledge, practical application of knowledge in life and full faith in God. This is first-class man.» (Conference, 16 July, 1975).

Five tactical aspects have already been mentioned in the previous section: the need to train devotees to appropriately connect their social activities with devotional service (without sahajya); to develop social relationships in Vaishnava society and support such social interaction in every possible way; to support brahmanas; to learn to live simply at one's level of conditionality even while living in urban settings; and of course, the importance to establish socially independent farming settlements. Undoubtedly there are many important aspects of a proper establishment of varnashrama. Here we shall emphasize only a few more of those, as there must be another study to explore them in detail.

Although we can certainly educate adults in various qualities and skills of life, the most optimal time for education is between the age of five and twenty-five, so gurukulas are strategically important for the actual manifestation of varnashrama. Describing an ideal varnashrama community Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his keynote essay "Gita Nagari," that a gurukula should be built immediately after establishing the main temple of the community; therefore, it is one of the primary elements of the community:

«After the construction of the Temple of Sri Partha Sarathi at Gita-nagari, the next programme of work in the Gita-nagari will be to start one academic educational institution under the name of Geeta School, or Geeta Pathshala. This educational institution shall be conducted as a Brahmacharya Ashram of the Gurukul system. In this institution, children not exceeding seven years of age shall be admitted and they shall be educated up to the age of 20 years, equipping them with sound body and sound mind, so that they may be ideal householders in the latter part of their life, which will bring real peace and prosperity to the human society.» (Essay "Gita-nagari").

According to the essay parents of these children could either live in the community and then their children would receive absolutely free education in gurukula, or they could send their children to school from somewhere else.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke of varnashrama colleges in our community, he primarily meant the education of adolescents, not adult devotees:

«Prabhupada: ...technological college. Similarly, this is another college, varnasrama college.

Satsvarupa: For the public in general?

Prabhupada: Eh? Yes. Anyone. Just like engineering college is open for anyone. He must be ready to take up the training. Similarly, this varnasrama college, he must be ready, the student, must be ready to take up the training.

Hrdayananda: Would it be for a particular age group?

Prabhupada: Yes, any education, from childhood. Yes. Education means from childhood. Hare Krsna. Kaumara acaret prajno dharman bhagavatan iha. [SB 7.6.1]: "One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of life—in other words, from the tender age of childhood—to practice the activities of devotional service..."] The... How... We are getting so many sannyasis, they should teach. Teaching should be done by the sannyasis. Just like in missionary school, the fathers teaches.

Hrdayananda: How would it be different than gurukula?

Prabhupada: Eh?

Hrdayananda: How would it differ from gurukula?

Prabhupada: Gurukula is only for the small children. Preliminary, primary. And when the children are grown up, they should be sent to the varṇa asrama school or college for further developed training.» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

In addition to teaching children, older devotees, who come to Krishna consciousness society, could also be professionally involved within the society.

«Hrdayananda: So, Prabhupada, in our temples, we have so many devotees. Should the devotees...?

Prabhupada: They should be engaged.

Hrdayananda: Should they be trained in a particular...?

Prabhupada: Yes. Those who are not able to preach or to do other things, they must go to the plough department, agriculture.

Hrdayananda: Those who cannot preach.

Prabhupada: Yes. Those who are less educated, not very much expert in preaching, they must be acting as ksatriya or vaisya, or as sudra.

Hrdayananda: And sometimes...

Prabhupada: Not he's sudra. Always remember that. But he has to act to fulfill the, fill up the gap» (Walk, 14 March, 1974).

And then, they could be engaged in an appropriate service according to their propensities:

«Prabhupada: They should be engaged in studying sastras, writing books and in the worship of the Deity, lecturing enlightened people. This is brahmanaa. They haven't got to work as ksatriya, as vaisya. They are simply intellectuals. This is brahmanaa, with good character.

Devotee: Distributing books?

Prabhupada: Yes. And the distribution book can be done by the vaisya, trade. It is a trade» (Conversation, 1 August, 1975).

To step back from tactics for a moment and return to the underlying principles of education, it is worth emphasizing that vranashrama will never develop in our society, until devotees learn the principle of yukta-vairagya and the path of karma-yoga in Krishna consciousness, and also learn the relation of varnashrama to ISKCON for different categories of people.

Vaishyas undoubtedly play an important role in the creation of the social order because they are the ones who create jobs; neither brahmanas, nor kshatriyas, nor sudras do it. Instead of doing some business on their own, vaishyas could undertake a suitable useful endeavour as part of ISKCON mission under the spiritual guidance and do it not for their own profit but primarily as a service to the society in karma yoga mood in Krishna consciousness. So, it happened to certain projects during Śrīla Prabhupāda's time, such as the establishment and marketing of "Spiritual Heaven" incense:

«Regarding your question about incense. Karandhara has just informed me that our Spiritual Sky incense business is making now \$1,000,000 a year to spend for Krsna. How can that be maya? Everyone must be encouraged to do what he likes to do for Krsna, so if someone likes to do business for Krsna, let them make \$1,000,000 for Krsna» (SPL to Hamsaduta, 20 November, 1971).

It is important to understand that within such disposition not everyone in the society serves themselves by earning money for their families and attending spiritual programs. But everyone must understand their professional activities as their service to the mission: some serve through preaching, some through organizing businesses, and some by sacrificing a portion of their finances to the greater cause. But if legs, arms, stomach, and head see themselves as separate parts from the whole body and think only about their own benefit, then it creates a problem.

And there is no question here that someone misses out, if they identify themselves as an integral part of the whole body of ISKCON, while others do not do so. It may indeed cause discomfort socially but spiritually our service to the Lord is not affected because others do not serve Him. At the same time, for devotees to have faith in the body of ISKCON and confidence that their service will be properly engaged the society must have a strong head to trust. If the head and hands fail to properly manage their service, it undermines the whole institution of varnashrama.

As for the settlements, Śrīla Prabhupāda suggested that these kinds of settlements should be self-sufficient through their preaching activities of various kinds, supply of food and paraphernalia for Deity worship, primarily to ISKCON temples, communities, and vegetarian restaurants.

«There are already dozens of such centers and farms where we are protecting cows like our New Vrndavana community in West Virginia, Bhaktivedanta Manor in London, altogether over fourteen such projects have been started throughout the world to date. We are giving protection to cows with great profit. We are getting huge amounts of milk from which we are preparing lovely yogurt, dahi, sandesa, rasagulla, gulabjamon, etc. We have sufficient quantity of ghee for preparing kacori, samosa, and other very palatable confectioneries. The people of this country gradually taking this idea very seriously the vegetarian diet and stopping cow killing in the

practical way. We have got more than 100 temples all over the world and attached to every temple we are opening farms, and in many cities restaurants, and all of them are going very successfully» (SPL to Krishna das Maheshwara, 11 July, 1976).

It is important to note, however, that projects cannot be fully recouped if they focus only on the home market with a small number of devotees; they need to learn to create different products that will be in demand in a broader society.

Also, during the establishment of such projects, family people could donate finances or other fruits of their work to support them, if they earn income outside the community. In this way, communities could carry out their activities.

That said, since this kind of community establishment can involve severe asceticism on a daily level for people who are conditioned to high levels of comfort, Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned appropriate housing on farms so that these people could also have a place to make their home:

«Jagadīśa: New Vrindaban is very austere. If we build little bungalows with modern convenience...

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes.

Jagadīśa: There has to be some modern convenience.

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. Then we shall do that.» (Conversation, 11 January, 1977).

Another important aspect is to set an example of a healthy community, and then other people will naturally reach for an appropriate way of life because they will see that it is not a phantasmagoria but it is real.

«Satsvarūpa: If we stopped all the transportation industry, there would be huge unemployment. It would be a great...

Prabhupāda: No, no, we are not going to stop employment. We live like this. You see. If you like, you live like us.

Bhagavān: Example.

Prabhupāda: Example.

Satsvarūpa: Not that we dictate to the... Not that we are going to force everyone.

Prabhupāda: No, we are not going to force anyone. "Our mode of living is like this. If you like you can adopt." Just like we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. So we are not forcing anyone that "You also, you must chant." No. We live like this. » (Walk, 27 May, 1974).

And when those people come, they may even be non-devotees but willing to live according to certain rules, then they can also be occupied in the service. In this way the next step will take place in the development of the society:

«Ramesvara: But for many people who live in the cities, they have their jobs already. They don't want to give it up... Say, in America, most people live in the cities, and they already have their job, and they are set in their ways.

Prabhupada: But you said that there is unemployment also.

Ramesvara: To a certain extent. But there are still 250,000,000 people. So most of them...

Prabhupada: So those who are unemployed, let them come to us. We shall give them employment.» (Conversation, 11 January, 1977).

In the principle of individualization of education, the author attempts to describe what role varnashrama plays in ISKCON and how it is feasible practically. Undoubtedly, this is quite a complex subject, and only its very general idea has been presented here, which is far from considering all the realities, aspects, and nuances; otherwise, such a description would have grown into a separate book. There is a lot of work ahead for ISKCON in this area, and may these words Śrīla Prabhupāda said in the last months of his life serve as inspiration to those, who will endeavour to develop a social culture in our society:

«And money, spend for Kṛṣṇa—for Kṛṣṇa's palace, for Kṛṣṇa's temple, for Kṛṣṇa's worship, gorgeous, as gorgeously as... Not for false... This is the human civilization. And to organize this, varnashrama will help you to divide the society—brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya—as there is division in the body. That will help. Don't waste human form of body for sense gratification. I wanted to introduce this. Now I have given you ideas. You can do it. You are all intelligent. For Caitanya Mahāprabhu's para-upakara. .. So you do good to others. Not exploit others. Any human being who has been bestowed by this body has the capacity to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Give them chance and make situation favorable. Is that clear?» (Conversation, 8 October, 1977).

Availability of education

In fact, real education, that is, devotional service, has a quality of "apratihata"; it is available to everyone irrespective of any material conditions. There is no reason whatsoever other than us why the readers or the writer of these pages should not always and continuously be engaged in devotional service from this very second henceforth. This very second or any second thereafter each of us could theoretically decide to spend a lifetime in devotional service and not be distracted by any other things. No material conditions - neither ill health or poverty, nor anything else - can really stop or distract from devotional service.

«There is nothing to stop, in whatever condition we may be. Ahaituky apratihata. Devotional service is, I mean to say, without any impediment, apratihata. Nothing can check it—that is devotional service—in any circumstances. No material circumstances can check your Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When it is, you are firmly convinced and situated in that position, that is real bhakti-yoga. Nothing can disturb you. Nobody can say, "Oh, for this condition, now I am unable to prosecute this Kṛṣṇa consciousness." That means he was never in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Nothing can check» (Lecture, 27 December, 1966).

Devotees may feel that they miss out on something, and their first need is to correct this material condition and after they can better perform devotional service. But this is self-deception. First, one can perform devotional service in any condition, and second, nothing can change already preordained karma except devotional service, and it can transform any material condition, even one's destiny:

«Of course, insofar as your material condition is concerned, generally that cannot be checked. You have to suffer. But in the case of a devotee, that suffering also can be stopped or minimized. Otherwise, Krsna's statement would be false: ahaa tvda sarva-papebhyo moksayisyami [Bg. 18.66]—"I will deliver you from all the reactions to your sinful activities." Suffering must befall me on account of my sinful activities, but Krsna says, "I will deliver you from all the reactions to your sinful activities." This should be clear. Ordinarily, destiny cannot be checked. Therefore, instead of wasting your time trying to change your economic condition or material destiny apart from Krsna consciousness, you should employ your priceless human energy for attaining Krsna consciousness, which cannot be checked.» ("Civilization and Transcendence", Chapter 2).

Certainly, it does not mean that one stops supporting one's body, stops engaging in daily subsistence activities, and so on. All these activities become devotional service if one observes the appropriate methodology described in the principle of continuity of education. Nor does it mean that everyone should immediately try to take up an appropriate level of practice because that would violate the principle of systematicity. There is no single external reason that prevents us from engaging in devotional service, but one reason does exist: it is us and immaturity of our desire to engage in devotional service. It cannot be imitated; it must mature within us. That is why we have spoken about those needs in the description of the principle of living leadership in education in the list of a guru's duties. They must be met so that devotional service remains available despite our inner unreadiness to engage in continuous devotional service.

So, there are two aspects. On the one hand, it is necessary to explain an independent nature of devotional service so that devotees focus on it, and are not distracted by other methods to attain happiness. But they should not misunderstand their complete independence from the material world. The material world does not hold them but they tie themselves to it, so there is a regulated process of liberation from this bond, which usually cannot be broken overnight.

Here comes the role of those who provide education: it must be delivered in a manner that is accessible to people. It means several things. First, the methodology of education must be consistent both with the spiritual level of a devotee and with their material perceptions. We have talked about the levels of a devotee in the principle of systematicity, but here we will say a few words about the peculiarities of perception. For example, from the material point of view, not only do people have different levels of intelligence but they perceive the world differently. And here we need a methodology for conveying truths to them in accordance with their nature, even if they are spiritual. Here we are talking about the fact that some people need visual aspects, some people need structure and logic, some people need images and emotions, some people need

communication, and some people need time to think alone. This is a certain material science that is also worth learning in order to better address the peculiarities of the mind and psyche of others.

«Śrīla Vyāsadeva had already explained the text of the Vedas in various ways up to the Mahābhārata for the understanding of less intelligent women, śūdras and fallen members of the family of twice-born men.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.4.3).

«Tamala Kṛṣṇa: "I hope that they meet with your approval. We are now in the process of completing a reproduction of the samsara display for the twofold purpose of museum publicity, a special photograph to be taken by a famous photographer..." It's funny. You told him not to do this, but they went ahead and did it. "...and an exhibit to be displayed at the Los Angeles First Annual Ratha-yatra festival grounds. This samsara diorama has an outstanding response from the general public, and we hope to make it available to many centers for the preaching work in the near future. In connection with this I had an idea of constructing traveling trailers housing one such exhibit, complete with lights and sound, explaining the process..."

Prabhupada: Oh, it will be very nice.

<...>

Prabhupada: Without reading books they'll understand the philosophy. That is the advantage. Mass of people, without education, they will understand the philosophy» (Conversation, 14 July, 1977).

Various aspects of education must be engaged according to the nature of individuals being educated. Usually, educators tend to believe that others are like themselves, but here it is important to understand the characteristics of others and learn to adapt to them, to offer them those aspects of devotional service and study of scriptural truths that are more suitable to their nature.

«So the education was free. So every student, education was free. And village to village education was... So in former days—even fifty years before I have seen in villages—there was some small school, and all the villages boys, they were coming and taking education. So education was very much widespread because education was free in this way.» (Lecture, 12 August, 1966).

And it is not only the task of those who provide education, but the task of the entire society which provides conditions for an available education:

«There is a need of such vipras in the social structure, and it is the duty of the state to maintain them comfortably, as designed in the Vedic procedure. Such expert vipras, being sufficiently paid by the state, could give free service to the people in general, and thus this department of Vedic knowledge could be available for all.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.12.29).

And although the quote speaks of financial provision of such brahmanas by the state, it is only one aspect of the general principle. The principle itself is that as Vaishnava communities we must

think about how to take care of those who are socially or physically unable to attend spiritual activities, how to remove those barriers from their path.

However, availability should not discourage devotees and devalue spiritual practice in their minds. Such is the mind of a conditioned living being: it becomes used to what it has and ceases to appreciate it. For example, usually a person who has never been seriously sick does not realise in full depth how lucky they are to have a healthy body. One who has eyesight does not realize one's good fortune to have eyesight; and the same mechanism happens with spiritual knowledge and practices. Therefore, availability does not always mean easy to obtain. Availability means to create an environment that is conducive to spiritual practice. And it may sound paradoxical, but sometimes it means to make the external conditions for practice easier, and sometimes the opposite – to make them more difficult. This is an individual process that again requires careful adjustment by spiritual leaders.

«My dear Kṛṣṇa, Your Lordship has protected us from a poisoned cake, from a great fire, from cannibals, from the vicious assembly, from sufferings during our exile in the forest and from the battle where great generals fought. And now You have saved us from the weapon of Aśvatthāmā. I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again so that we could see You again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths. My Lord, Your Lordship can easily be approached, but only by those who are materially exhausted. One who is on the path of [material] progress, trying to improve himself with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education and bodily beauty, cannot approach You with sincere feeling.»
(Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.8.24-26)

Availability in this case means massiveness, which means a deviation from an individual approach in favour of the general patterns to reduce the burden. Thus, an individual approach that allows to make education mass (because it considers the peculiarities of everyone and adapts to them) paradoxically destroys itself in the end. This is one of the difficulties associated with the development of an educational system, but it is of a secondary applied nature. Still, we mention this point here in order to emphasize the importance of the fact that availability of education should not exclude from it an individual approach. The task of the leadership of an educational institution or the society is how to mobilize a sufficient number of individuals, who would be qualified to provide living guidance, and how to organize their coordinated work.

Common mistakes in the principle of individuality of education:



- various mistakes related to this principle mentioned in the description of other principles;
- an independent attempt to individualize a spiritual path when a devotee attempts to act in devotional service without living guidance;
- delivery of spiritual science according to one general pattern, without understanding how it applies in different places, times, and circumstances. Or, in attempts to be mindful of the audience to become dependent on its opinions, and correspondingly to deviate from the truth or to downgrade the goal to the satisfaction of the audience;
- disrespect and exploitation, or conversely, envy of those, who are engaged in another prescribed duty which corresponds to a particular varna within the social structure of varnashrama;
- misunderstanding of the necessity of the existence of all varnas for the success of the society;
- misunderstanding how the manifestation of varnashrama in ISKCON overlaps with four different audiences in different ways:
 - for devotees liberated from the influence of material energy; this category of Vaishnavas is beyond varnashrama in absolutely every sense, and its representatives can perform the duties of all varnas in a perfect manner;
 - for devotees, who are mostly liberated from the influence of material energy; this category of devotees is beyond varnashrama, but their predisposition to one activity or another must be taken into consideration in their service, but it does not in any way affect their position as Vaishnavas;
 - for devotees, who are still under the influence of material energy; this category of Vaishnavas, although higher than brahmanas through devotional service, may not have the necessary qualifications and should be engaged in the service of the varna that suits best their qualifications;
 - for the non-devotees, who came into contact with the society of devotees; by the fact that in such a society people do not merely act within the framework of varnashrama, but are under the guidance of devotees, therefore, to bring the vast majority of the population into devotional service is a supremely important aspect of the preaching mission;
- misunderstanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s extremely negative attitude toward the involvement of devotees in the technical materialistic education of the modern world. On the other hand,

not to understand that he offered a comprehensive culture of education in the gurukulas and colleges of varnashrama, and that it is essential for devotees to acquire;

- lack of emphasis on educating Vaishnava children in the appropriate educational institutions as a strategically important aspect of the development of ISKCON;
- lack of recognition of the absolute necessity to establish an internal social infrastructure in ISKCON, as well as to train devotees in a simple and natural way of life. The best place to do so is our own settlement, which supports itself through various sources, for example, trading food and paraphernalia of worship, as well as preaching;
- unwillingness of devotees to engage their professional occupation or its fruits for the benefit of the community, financial withdrawal from the community, unwillingness to identify themselves financially with a wider Vaishnava family. On the other hand, there may be a lack of appropriate respect for Vaishnava's contributions and irresponsible attitude toward their donations;
- to teach people with different mental differences, intelligence, etc. in the same way, without adapting the methodology of the educational process to their individual nature;
- absence of a topic related to the independence of devotional service from material circumstances and the ability to perform it in any circumstances in the educational program;
- lack of flexibility in the availability of various Vaishnava activities, especially to vulnerable members of a Vaishnava community, or conversely, a devaluation of spiritual practice in their minds at the expense of its availability. The root in both cases is misunderstanding that availability means to create favourable conditions for spiritual practice by any means, and it is an important aspect of caring for people.



Principle of Mindfulness

Principle of mindfulness

The principle of mindfulness is another principle of education. In fact, it is a part of the principle of individuality because it means the presence of consciousness, which is the key difference between an individual and matter.

«The difference between matter and spirit is that matter has no consciousness like the living entity; therefore this consciousness is supreme and eternal. Consciousness cannot be produced by a combination of matter.» (Bhagavad-gita, 10.22).

To be more precise, even matter as such is a special form of consciousness. Thus, consciousness is an integral part of existence, though it is quite difficult to comprehend.

«When the first puruṣa-avatāra, Mahā-viṣṇu, glances over material nature, material nature becomes agitated, and the puruṣa-avatāra thus impregnates matter with the living entities. Simply by the glance of Mahā-viṣṇu, consciousness is created, and this consciousness is known as the mahat-tattva. The predominating Deity of the mahat-tattva is Vāsudeva. This created consciousness is then divided into three departmental activities according to the three guṇas, or modes of material nature. <...> Consciousness in the mode of passion produces intelligence, and the predominating Deity in this case is Pradyumna. He is the master of the senses. Consciousness in the mode of ignorance causes the production of ether (the sky) and the ear.» (Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Chapter 8).

Because consciousness varies, the process of bringing a living being back to its original state of consciousness is related to the process of awakening or expanding its mindfulness:

«The perfection of intelligence is attained when one becomes fixed in the activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By the proper use of intelligence one's consciousness is expanded, and the ultimate expansion of consciousness is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.26.29).

Conscious submission



Occasionally, in devotees' mind the principles of accepting authority and living guidance is similar to turning off the mind and merely becoming a mindless puppet controlled by other self-conscious souls. But that would mean that Krishna consciousness movement, which advocates the awakening of consciousness from sleep, on the contrary, would put it to sleep by turning a living being into soulless matter.

It may seem that mindfulness and independence on the one hand, and submission on the other, are two opposite poles of the same axis, contradicting each other. But rather, they are two parameters on two different axes, and one does not contradict the other. Moreover, that view of them is not altogether correct because it assumes that they are independent of each other. In reality, only those, who act consciously and independently, can be truly submissive, and only those, who are submissive, can act truly consciously. Therefore, mindfulness is an integral part of submission, no matter how strange it may sound at first glance. One simply must not confuse independence with autonomy because independence implies dependence, no matter how paradoxical that may sound. A devotee performs the service to the Lord, acts on his own and demonstrate independence, for example, when preparing and offering food to Him. In doing so, he understands that the result of his activity depends on the Lord; that his ability to engage in devotional service depends on the Lord; that the availability of the ingredients for the offering depends on the Lord. And that, after all, his very existence is only possible because of the Lord. So, he is independent and dependent at the same time.

Let us now explore in more detail what we mean when we speak about conscious submission but not about the service to the Lord in general.

«It is not that we should blindly surrender, but we should be able to inquire with intelligence.

Without inquiry, we cannot make advancement. In school, a student who makes inquiries from the teacher is usually an intelligent student. It is generally a sign of intelligence when a small child inquires from his father, “Oh, what is this? What is that?” We may have a very good spiritual master, but if we have no power to inquire, we cannot make progress. ... The beginning injunction of the Vedānta-sūtra is athāto brahma-jijñāsā: “Now is the time to inquire about Brahman.” The word atha means that one who is intelligent, who has come to the point of realizing the basic frustrations of material life, is capable of making inquiry. In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam it is stated that one should inquire from a spiritual master about subjects that are “beyond this darkness.” This material world is by nature dark, and it is artificially lighted by fire. Our inquiries should be about the transcendental worlds, which lie beyond this universe. If

one is desirous to find out about these spiritual worlds, he should seek out a spiritual master; otherwise, there is no point in searching. If I want to study the Bhagavad-gītā or the Vedānta-sūtra in order to make material improvement, it is not necessary to find a spiritual master... It is not that we are to submit ourselves blindly. The spiritual master may be self-realized and situated in the Absolute Truth, yet we have to question him in order to understand all spiritual points.» (Rāja-vidyā: The King of Knowledge, Chapter 7).

There are two aspects mentioned in the quote above. The first is a necessity of conscious surrender, when we test another person before entrusting our will into their hands, and only then entrust ourselves into their hands, that is, we act not at all thoughtlessly (for details, see the description of the principle of living leadership). The second is an understanding that even a surrendered person does not turn off their mind, they continue to think and ask questions, and the senior responds to those question.

This is how a disciple's consciousness manifests itself, a disciple initiates receiving spiritual knowledge. We can see that our main Scriptures, such as Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad Bhagavatam, are composed on the questions. Shukadeva Gosvami did not immediately meet Maharaj Parikshit, he met many other personalities before that. And Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.19.25, describes that no one cared about him except curious women and children who were overly fretful with him and not interested in spiritual science. So, it was Maharaja Parikshit whom Srimad Bhagavatam was narrated to because it was him who asked appropriate questions. And the principle here is very simple: a person who is not ready to ask an appropriate question has no point to receive an answer to it. So, a strong independent desire for knowledge is another important aspect of mindfulness.

«One must be jīṣṇāsu, very much inquisitive to learn from the bona fide spiritual master.» (Nectar of Instruction, Text 5).

When in his books Śrīla Prabhupāda disagrees with the idea that a disciple receives knowledge from a spiritual master through some kind of electric charge, the idea itself seems rather ridiculous. In fact, if to grasp the point, we may also sometimes hope for a transcendental electric charge of mercy and that everything will come on its own by the mercy of a spiritual master, and we do not need to make any effort or to have our own understanding of the Scriptures based on logic. But this is how Śrīla Prabhupāda describes it:

«The Lord imparted instructions with full senses, and Arjuna received them with full senses, and thus there was a perfect exchange of sensible and logical understanding between the master and the disciple. Spiritual understanding is nothing like an electrical charge from the master to the disciple, as foolishly claimed by some propaganda-mongers. Everything is full of sense and logic, and the exchange of views between the master and disciple is possible only when the reception is submissive and real. In the Caitanya-caritāmṛta it is said that one should receive the teaching of Lord Caitanya with intellect and full senses so that one can logically understand the great mission.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.3.20).

In this quote one can even find a striking and rather unusual phrase for many devotees: "exchange of opinions" in a teacher-student relationship. Having one's own opinion and dialogue with a teacher is not rejected; but the same quote speaks of the proper qualifications required for such interaction: "the student listens with humility and really wants to hear what the teacher tells him." Of course, it is not up to a disciple to determine the existence of such desire, as they are much more likely to be in illusion, but for the teacher, if that teacher is real. A student thinks of himself as follows:

«Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself presented the perfect example of how to be a disciple. A spiritual master knows very well how to engage each disciple in a particular duty, but if a disciple, thinking himself more advanced than his spiritual master, gives up his orders and acts independently, he checks his own spiritual progress. Every disciple must consider himself completely unaware of the science of Kṛṣṇa and must always be ready to carry out the orders of the spiritual master to become competent in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A disciple should always remain a fool before his spiritual master.» (Caitanya-charitamṛta, Adi-lila, 7.72, purport).

And the key not to lose conscious and to remain submissive is actually very simple; it is found in a verse that probably every ISKCON member knows. But not everyone follows it. It is praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā.

«Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.» (Bhagavad-gita, 4.34).

If a devotee thinks consciously and does so with respect, service, and humble inquiry, then such awareness is extremely beneficial. Otherwise, a disciple may lose identity.

Thus, a disciple humbly listens and then independently meditates on the acquired knowledge and reflects on it, consulting in his conclusions with the seniors:

«If you simply hear from the authoritative source the instruction of Bhagavad-gita, and if you simply meditate upon that speech, that instruction, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa instructed like this. Arjuna received like this. He questioned like this. He answered like this," that is meditation, perfect meditation, and you become liberated. Tad-viceṣṭitam. It is not very difficult job. Simply you have to receive. Therefore satya-sravanah, suci-sravanah. Suci-sravanah. You have to hear from the pure source, give aural reception, and think of it, meditate upon it. Simply by doing this, you are liberated. These are not bluff. Here is the evidence. Simply receive the message from the right source and contemplate and meditate upon that instruction. You are liberated. Chanting and hearing. Hearing and... sravanam kirtanam [SB 7.5.23]. First hearing, then chanting. Hear from the right source and discuss amongst yourselves. Istagosthi. Then the perfection.» (Lecture, 13 июня, 1969).

There is another aspect that is important to understand. There is a natural sequence: first there is conscious surrender, then there is conscious submissiveness, then there is an awakening of one's free will. Thus, a person first consciously decides to surrender their free will:

«Naya-kovidāḥ means nyāya-nipuṇa. Bhagavad-dūtas, those who are gosvāmīs, they place everything with nyāya, or logic. Their instructions are not blind, dogmatic. Naya-kovidāḥ. Everything, what is said by Kṛṣṇa or His representative, they are not dogmas. Those who are not representative of Kṛṣṇa, they will say simply dogmas. Just like in every religion there is a dogma. But in bhāgavata religion, bhāgavata-dharma, there is no dogma. Caitanya Mahāprabhu's bhāgavata-dharma, the Caitanya-caritāmṛta's author, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, says, therefore, that caitanyera dayāra kathā karaha vicāra. Vicāra means you just try to understand the gift of Lord Caitanya by logic, vicāra. Don't follow blindly. Following blindly something, that is not good. That will not stay. But one should take everything with logic. But the servants of God, they put everything in logic. Caitanyera dayāra kathā karaha vicāra. If you study the Caitanya's philosophy with logic and argument... Don't go by sentiment. The so-called missionary, they're simply bogus propaganda without any logic. Without any logic. Just like some missionary people are propagating a man to become God. How a man can become God? There must be evidences how God incarnates. Not that somebody by worshipping a demigod becomes God. So many false propaganda is going on. That is not logical at all. So one should be intelligent to understand the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa or philosophy of Lord Caitanya with logic and argument. Don't follow blindly. But once you accept, you cannot argue. You have to accept blindly. But before accepting, you take to logic. But when you accept, then don't go back. Then that is falldown» (Lecture, 6 января, 1971).

Then one listens, but does so as a conscious rather than thoughtless living being, and then, for the first time in millions of lives one gains an ability to properly dispose of one's free will through such training, and therefore, a person gains it back:

«Your next question was about the free will, whether we have it or not? If one is not intelligent enough for making for making decisions, then all decisions shall be sanctioned by the spiritual master. Neophyte means no independent decisions, no free will, that means surrender. But when he is trained up then automatically he gets his freedom. Just like a small child can only eat such things which are sanctioned by his parents, not by his own discretion. Free will is that when the controller says do this, you can use your free will to do it or not to do it. You have got the power to not do: iti te jnanam akhyatam guhyad guhyataram maya vimrsyaited asesena yathecchasi tatha kuru [Bg. 18.63] "Thus I have explained to you the most confidential of all knowledge. Deliberate on this fully, and then do what you wish to do." [Bg. 18.65] Krishna asks, "Have you decided to fight?" "Yes, I have decided to follow Your order." This is free will.» (SPL to Yajnesvara, 2 January, 1972).

Eventually, when a living being is fully qualified, there is no longer any contradiction between its will and a spiritual master's instructions. Thus, a disciple and master's desire merge together, and

so submission becomes unnecessary; it occurs naturally and a disciple desires to act as a spiritual master instructs them to act.

«This is the secret of success. After being initiated and receiving the orders of the spiritual master, the disciple should unhesitatingly think about the instructions or orders of the spiritual master and should not allow himself to be disturbed by anything else. This is also the verdict of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, who, while explaining the verse of Bhagavad-gītā beginning vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana (Bg. 2.41), points out that the order of the spiritual master is the life substance of the disciple. The disciple should not consider whether he is going back home, back to Godhead; his first business should be to execute the order of his spiritual master. Thus a disciple should always meditate on the order of the spiritual master, and that is perfectional meditation. Not only should he meditate upon that order, but he should find out the means by which he can perfectly worship and execute it.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.24.15).

Although the word "faith" in Russian usually implies to accept something as true, without any evidence. But the Scriptures state that faith has the opposite nature: it is a voluntary acceptance of the superiority of the Scriptures over one's own knowledge, that comes from an imperfect sense perception. And this acceptance comes through a logical understanding of the superiority of the Scriptures:

«Vicāra means you just try to understand the gift of Lord Caitanya by logic, vicāra. Don't follow blindly.

Following blindly something, that is not good. That will not stay. But one should take everything with logic.» (Lecture, 6 January 1971).

«We are trying to give you information from authoritative Scriptures, Vedas. And if you are fortunate enough, you will take this information, try to understand by your reasoning, by your logic, and adopt it, and your life will be sublime.» (Lecture, 3 May, 1969).

«This is the statement of authority. Now, apart from statement of authority, you have to apply your reason and arguments» (Lecture, 27 November, 1968).

And even to accept the authority of the Scriptures does not override logic, as it is one of the characteristics of uttama-adhikari.

«One who is expert in logic and in understanding the revealed Scriptures, and who always has firm conviction and deep faith that is not blind, is to be considered a topmost devotee in devotional service.» (Chaitanya-charitamṛta, Madhya-līla, 22.66).

A thorough understanding of scripture-based logic is also necessary for a madhyama-adhikari, especially when he is engaged in preaching:

«No one can attain the Absolute Truth by argument. One may be very expert in logic, and another person may be even more expert in the art of argument. Because there is so much word jugglery in logic, one can never come to the real conclusion about the Absolute Truth by argument. The followers of the Vedic principles understand this. However, it is seen here that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu defeated the Buddhist philosophy by argument. Those who are preachers in ISKCON will certainly meet many people who believe in intellectual arguments. Most of these people do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. Nevertheless, they accept intellectual speculation and argument. Therefore the preachers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be prepared to defeat others by argument, just as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did. In this verse it is clearly said, tarkei khaṇḍila prabhu. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu put forward such a strong argument that the Buddhists could not counter Him to establish their cult» (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila, 9.49).

Krishna consciousness is completely non-dogmatic. However, it is important to correctly define the term "dogma" because dictionaries give different but not always accurate meanings. In our understanding "dogma" means to accept a statement as true without adequate evidence as to why it is true. In this sense, our Scriptures are completely non-dogmatic; they explain spiritual science precisely as science. Here is an interesting dialogue when Śrīla Prabhupāda rejects the dogmatic approach of Christians to their Scriptures and their canonical interpretation.

«Mike Robinson: How do you know that the animal has a soul?»

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You can know, also. Here is the scientific proof: the animal eats, you eat; the animal sleeps, you sleep; the animal has sex, you have sex; the animal also defends, you also defend. Then what is the difference between you and the animal? How can you say that you have a soul but the animal doesn't?

Mike Robinson: I can see that completely. But the Christian Scriptures say ...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Don't bring in any Scriptures; this is a commonsense topic. Try to understand. The animal is eating, you are eating; the animal is sleeping, you are sleeping; the animal is defending, you are defending; the animal is having sex, you are having sex; the animals have children, you have children; they have a living place, you have a living place. If the animal's body is cut, there is blood; if your body is cut, there is blood. So, all these similarities are there. Now, why do you deny this one similarity, the presence of the soul? This is not logical. You have studied logic? In logic there is something called analogy. Analogy means drawing a conclusion by finding many points of similarity. If there are so many points of similarity between human beings and animals, why deny one similarity? That is not logic. That is not science.

Mike Robinson: But if you take the argument and use it the other way ...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: There is no other way. If you are not arguing on the basis of logic, then you are not rational.

...

Mike Robinson: I see. Can I come back to a question I had from before? When we were differing a few minutes ago you were saying, "Don't bring the Scriptures in; just use common sense." But what part do the Scriptures play in your religion? How important are they?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Our religion is a science. When we say that a child grows into a boy, it is science. It is not religion. Every child grows into a boy. What is the question of religion? Every man dies. What is the question of religion? And when a man dies, the body becomes useless. What is the question of religion? It is science. Whether you're Christian or Hindu or Muslim, when you die your body becomes useless. This is science. When your relative dies, you cannot say, "We are Christian; we believe he has not died." No, he has died. Whether you are Christian or Hindu or Muslim, he has died. So when we speak, we speak on this basis: that the body is important only as long as the soul is in the body. When the soul is not there, it is useless. This science is applicable to everyone, and we are trying to educate people on this basis.*

Mike Robinson: *But if I understand you correctly, you seem to be educating people on a purely scientific basis. Where does religion come into it at all?*

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Religion also means science. People have wrongly taken religion to mean faith – "I believe." [To a devotee:] Look up the word religion in the dictionary.*

Disciple: *Under religion the dictionary says "recognition of superhuman control or power, and especially of a personal God entitled to obedience, and effecting such recognition with the proper mental attitude."*

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Yes. Religion means learning how to obey the supreme controller. <...> Religion means scientific understanding of the supreme controller: to understand the supreme controller and obey Him – that's all.» (The Science of Self-Realization, Reincarnation and Beyond).*

After reading this dialogue, some readers may wonder- indeed, our spiritual science is presented with detailed explanations, but what about the statements of our Scriptures about the structure of the world that contradict the logic of modern science? Would the statements about a flat Earth be logical in the twenty-first century? And we accept such claims as dogma, don't we?

First, a description can have an allegorical or poetic meaning while conveying the point. For example:

«When Priyavrata drove his chariot behind the sun, the rims of his chariot wheels created impressions that later became seven oceans, dividing the planetary system known as Bhūmaṇḍala into seven islands.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.1.31).

But in the commentary on this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Sometimes planets floating in the cosmic space are called islands. That is to say, when Srimad Bhagavatam says "island," it does not always mean "a piece of land with a palm tree sticking out of the water". Similarly, Srimad Bhagavatam may elsewhere use poetic or simplified understandings because it sees no point to go into the technical structure of atoms, quantum-physics and so on; that is not its point. But the essential meaning is transmitted by Srimad Bhagavatam.

Also, a description may be given from the perspective of a different vision, or a different object may be in mind. For example, from the description of the structure of the same Bhu mandala, devotees conclude that the Earth is flat. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself stated otherwise:

« Some portion of the earth is flat. When you stand in any place you see flat, so for us to some extent it appears flat, but it is round» (SPL, 3 October, 1976).

Perspective is the key. Within the framework of this book, we do not attempt to show all possible variants. For example, it is possible that instead of the Earth as a planet in this or that text there may be a reference to the ecliptic of its movement on the surface, or to a certain part of the planet, which is seen in a flat perspective as it is done on maps. Or other, more complicated, but just as realistic options related to the larger dimensionality of space in which the Earth is both flat and sphere-like, depending on the perspective:

«Bhakti-prema: It is written the world... The earth is round and flat.

Prabhupāda: Hmm?

Bhakti-prema: Earth is round and flat both, together.

Prabhupāda: Yes.» (Conversation about the structure of the Bhu-mandala, 5 July, 1977).

In fact, if we analyse all statements of the Scriptures, they are perfectly logical as such because they describe reality. But our understanding of their statements can be illogical and unreliable. Just as Christians did when they incinerated people, who rejected the idea of a flat Earth. To answer these kinds of questions in particular Śrīla Prabhupāda created Bhaktivedanta Institute so that Vaishnavas with proper qualifications could give a meaningful explanation of what the Scriptures say.

In general, it must be understood that there is a term "incomprehensible" in the shastras, but it must be treated correctly. It does not mean an absolute inability to comprehend things, it means an inability to comprehend an object exactly with one's senses and mind, either in principle or at a given moment. For example, before the invention of a microscope bacteria were "incomprehensible" to humans, whereas Goloka of Vrindavana is incomprehensible in principle with our material senses but is comprehensible through devotion and mercy. Thus, if the Scriptures give us knowledge, we can understand something that is otherwise incomprehensible. For example, here is how Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this aspect of incomprehensibility and knowledge through scripture in a talk on the construction of Bhu mandala on July 5, 1977:

«Prabhupāda: Yes. Therefore inconceivable.

<...>

Prabhupāda: But we have to accept śāstra.

<...>

Prabhupāda: We're not conceiving it. It is already there.

Bhakti-prema: Then it is conceived, he says.

Prabhupāda: Conceived not by me.».

These somewhat confusing extracts from the lengthy dialogue say that there are things which cannot be understood with our senses, so we accept the shastra and comprehend the object that way. But that does not make it comprehensible; we have not comprehended it; we have received this knowledge from above. And not to take on faith something without proof is not dogma. Why? Because a person cannot understand reality by other means, and neither does a person have any other reliable source from which to learn about it. But there is this source, which by all parameters is credible and authoritative (and it has been proven). Why not accept knowledge from it? This is not dogma; it is proof of the source's authenticity and acceptance of information that cannot be obtained from any other source.

It is also important to understand that logic must be based on the statements of the Scriptures, not on anything else for example, so-called scientific data or opinions of contemporary ideologists, politicians, sociologists, and so forth. Logic is always based either on our opinion derived from sensory experience or on knowledge from some other source, which authority may be questionable. Vaishnavas accept logic that is derived from the Scriptures, but not logic that comes from the speculations of diseased conditioned living beings who, by definition, have no knowledge. Again, it is worth learning from the mistakes of other movements, and Christianity in particular, when Thomas Aquinas (discussed in detail earlier) in his desire to reconcile an unscientific understanding of the world order in Christianity with a scientific approach, used the logic of the latter and brought it into Christianity and thereby destroyed some of its key spiritual tenets.

This seemingly minor deviation from the topic of discussion is given to show that the statements of the Scriptures cannot be denied if they contradict our understanding. But to accept them verbatim without understanding can also bring many distorted truths into our picture of the world. Consciousness is required to understand them correctly; that is what conscious submission is all about.

If we talk about instruments for cultivating mindfulness in education, it includes various forms of interactive learning that allow students to engage their minds to a greater extent.

Such methods involve more active interaction between a teacher and a student:

«Sometimes the teacher questions to the student, and student replies, and sometimes the student questions to the teacher, and teacher replies. This is called istagosthi. To develop knowledge, these questions and answers are required» (Lecture, 21 ноября, 1966).

It also includes interaction among several disciples on the basis of the Scriptures:

«Bhagavata, from bhagavan it is called bhagavata. From bhagavat-sabda it is called bhagavata. So in the association of bhagavata, devotees, if we read Srimad-Bhagavatam... Sajatiya snigdhasya. Sajatiya means people thinking in the same way. So that means devotees who are interested in bhagavad-bhakti, to understand Bhagavan, they should read Srimad-Bhagavatam in the association. We should have regular classes. Just like school and colleges, eight hour, six

hour. Be engaged always in reading Srimad-Bhagavatam, discussing amongst yourself. Then you'll make progress» (Lecture, 16 January, 1975).

«The Paṣcarātra system includes methods of temple worship, and the Bhāgavata system includes the spreading of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy through the recitation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the discussion of philosophy with people who are interested. Through discussion, one can create an interest and understanding of the Paṣcarātra and Bhāgavata systems.» ("Chaitanya-charitamṛta", Madhya-lila, 19.169).

«Therefore one must learn detachment by discussion of spiritual science based on authoritative Scriptures, and one must hear from persons who are actually in knowledge» (Bhagavad-gita, 15.3-4).

This should also include personal practice, where a devotee engages in the application of the Scriptures and the manifestation of the Lord's will in one's life:

«For example, we know from Bhagavad-gita that Krishna says He is the taste in water. Now try to understand just how Krishna is that taste in water, that is the high-class education» (SPL to Hridayananda, 9 July, 1972).

There are countless interactive practices as such, so we will not list them here as it is a matter of detail. The main point is to remember the essence: why and when we need this kind of education. However, let us once again remind ourselves that all these forms of interactive teaching should not be opposed to humble hearing but should be based on it:

«If you do not know anything about the Supreme Lord, then how can you describe? Therefore hearing is the first item, sravanam. And the whole Vedic literature is called hearing, sruti, sruti-sastra. Sruti means to receive hearing. If you want to know the Supreme, you do not require to qualify yourself materially. You can remain what you are, but if you simply hear... God has given you the power of hearing. If you hear from authoritative sources, then you become perfect, simply by hearing. Therefore the first principle, hearing, is recommended, Sravanam» (Lecture, 1 December, 1966).

Succession

In our description of the principle of living leadership we did not address one important aspect, succession, but we will mention it here because it is a synthesis of the principles of living leadership and mindfulness. It is a mission of those who give living guidance to educate devotees who will be able to take responsibility for the next generation without losing their dependence on the previous generation of devotees.

More information could be found in another work by the author "The ABCs of Leadership" (has not been translated into English language by 2023) which describes a must style of living

leadership. And raising independent-minded devotees who take responsibility for the development of the mission is one aspect of that leadership. Therefore, we will not describe this aspect in detail here, we only mention its importance. Since the very essence of parampara is that one generation of devotees are to educate the next generation to become the next link in the chain and take responsibility for educating the next generation of Vaishnavas after. Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized the need for this attitude in his instructions. Here is just one out of hundreds of examples:

One who will pass this examination will be awarded with the title of Bhaktivedanta. I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program. (SPL to Hamsaduta, 3 January, 1969)

If at some point devotees are not prepared to lead others because they've been trained to be blind followers all their lives, the whole chain of disciplic succession would be broken.

Sensations and Emotions

The form of our mind is a product of all the sensations it has accumulated over many lifetimes as a result of our activities in the material world.

Sometimes in dreams we think that we are flying in the sky, although we have no experience of flying. This means that once in a previous life, either as a demigod or astronaut, we flew in the sky. The impression is there in the stockpile of the mind, and it suddenly expresses itself. <...> The impression is kept within the mind and sometimes becomes manifest either in dream or in thought. The conclusion is that the mind is the storehouse of various thoughts and experiences undergone during our past lives. (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.29.64)

In fact, every second we encounter various moments, experience them, and then consciously or subconsciously analyse our experiences, derive from them general principles of future activity, and change our behavioural patterns over time. This is a natural cycle, and numerous pedagogical and psychological models try to take into account (for example, David Kolb's famous cycle in the field of education). They take us back to previous experiences that we try to rethink, or they create a new situation for us to go through again but in a different way than we did before. These techniques help partially but as we know from The Nectar of Devotion, there are four kinds of experiences, and ordinary materialistic practices capture only the "top layer" of our subtle body, and they have no power to help with the more subtle forms of consequences of our past activities:

It is stated in the Padma Purāṇa that there are four kinds of effects due to sinful activities, which are listed as follows: (1) the effect that is not yet fructified, (2) the effect that is lying as seed, (3) the effect that is already mature and (4) the effect that is almost mature. ... Those effects described as "almost mature" refer to the distress from which one is suffering at present, and

the effects “lying as seed” are in the core of the heart, where there is a certain stock of sinful desires which are like seeds. ... Śukadeva points out that austerity, charity and the performance of ritualistic ceremonies for counteracting sinful activities are recommended processes, but that by performing them one cannot remove the sinful desire-seed from the heart, as was the case with Ajāmila in his youth. This sinful desire-seed can be removed only by achieving Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 1)

Why does bhakti alone have the power to eradicate the seeds that have not yet germinated? Further on in the same section, Śrīla Prabhupāda answers this question saying that false identification is to blame. Until it is replaced by the real one, it will be the root that makes everything else grow:

This tight knot of false ego is due to ignorance. As long as one is ignorant about his identity, he is sure to act wrongly and thereby become entangled in material contamination. (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 1)

Therefore, all such techniques of conscious introspection are not very productive on their own but they advance to a completely new level, when they are based on truths about spiritual self-awareness. That is, when devotees use them as instruments but their analysis is based on a spiritual worldview, that allows them to see the world in a new light.

In the description of the principle of practicality, we emphasized that devotees transform it into spiritual activity, unlike impersonalists who seek to stop any activity. In doing so, the essence of any activity lies in its consequences and results. For an individual living being, the consequences lie in the sensations they receive. Thus, the task of devotees is to learn to have spiritual experiences in their lives which naturally interrupt the taste for material pleasures. And the task of those, who care for devotees, is to learn how to instigate such experiences.

And while sensual pleasures are experienced by a person to a lesser degree even in a semi-conscious state, spiritual sensations become spiritual only through activated consciousness. Without it, a person simply becomes involved in a mechanical activity within the framework of the activities in the gunas of material nature.

It is easy to prove by experience, if we try to remember our life in Krishna consciousness. The most vivid, shaping our current character would be the memories of those, sometimes quite mundane and down-to-earth, events when we had spiritual experiences by the power of our Krishna consciousness. And the depth of the experience was conditioned according to the degree of awakening of our consciousness and the intensity of the external events.

To obtain such experiences is one of the instruments of the most effective educational process. While Krishna Himself, as The Supersoul undoubtedly and constantly teaches devotees, the proposed educational system must also take into account the need to instigate an appropriate awareness and sensitivity to the events of life, and sometimes to purposefully create events so that a devotee will have an opportunity to demonstrate a similar awareness.

Here it is also worth mentioning the role of emotions, which have a direct effect on the strength of the sensation received. For a conditioned living being, all emotions they receive are based on their false ego:

Because we misunderstand the material body to be the self, we are experiencing many emotions in relation to the body. Upon discovering, however, that the body is simply a bag of material chemicals, we carefully note how this illusion was created and then lose interest in the body. Discovering that we are actually an eternal soul within the body, we naturally focus our attention on that real self.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 10.14.28)

We are able to have access to real spiritual emotions only at the level of bhava:

After the elimination of all sins or obstacles on the path of devotional service, one can become attracted, one can have steadiness, one can have perfect taste, one can have transcendental emotions, and at last one can be situated on the plane of loving service of the Lord. (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.5.25)

However, that does not mean that novice devotees cannot have spiritual emotions. Their emotions may indeed be of a material nature but they may also be spiritual; their spirituality manifests itself according to a degree of devotion of these Vaishnavas:

The living entity, if he submits to this hearing process, will lose his long-cherished desire to dominate material nature, and gradually and proportionately, as he reduces his long desire to dominate, he comes to enjoy spiritual happiness. (Bhagavad Gita, 13.22)

Regarding your question about feeling emotions during kirtana, these are real spiritual emotions. Spiritual emotions can not be experienced by the fallen soul; but one who is feeling spiritual emotions is not actually fallen. That is the benediction of this Sankirtana Movement that it elevates one to the highest position of spiritual experiences. (SPL to Krsna Devi, 2 November, 1969)

Spiritual emotions can be awakened by an inner feeling of contact with the Lord and the Lord's presence in our lives. And material emotions can be activated in the service through the principle of yukta-vairagya described in the section on the continuity of education. Even negative emotions like anger can be engaged in service; we know Hanuman's and Arjuna's examples in this regard. Either way, emotional experiences skilfully integrated into the educational process will greatly enrich it. Sensations cannot be stopped, though we sometimes try to do so, but must be engaged in the service.

That is called nirvāṇa, stopping, stopping the feelings of... It is just like a patient suffering from some disease, and the doctor gives him some pill so that he dies and there is no more feeling. Oh. Then he sees it is all right. If by stopping feeling like that, that a... "Doctor, my son is having hundred and seven degree temperature." "All right. I stop it. Give him some injection,

poisonous." The child dies. Now there is no fever. Now the father says, "My child does not move." "Oh, whether this fever is stopped or not?" "Yes, there is no fever also." "That's all right. My business finished." That sort of foolish doctor will not do. (Lecture, 19 april 1966)

Motivation

Motivation for action is an important aspect of mindfulness. A motive is not so important in the ordinary material activity. Normally, if a person does something, they get an appropriate result. But in spiritual practice, in spiritual education, motive is of paramount importance as it transforms any activity from material to spiritual, or vice versa:



«Advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness depends on the attitude of the follower.» (Nectar of Instruction, Preface).

«he Lord is seated in everyone's heart, and He knows the devotee's motive and arranges everything achievable. In other words, the pseudo devotee, who is anxious to achieve material gains, cannot attain the highest perfectional stage because the Lord is in knowledge of his motive. One merely has to become sincere in his purpose, and then the Lord is there to help in every way.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.13.49).

It is important to understand that it is not enough to be involved in activities that resemble devotional service. A proper consciousness is necessary as well. For example, sometimes a person comes to a community of devotees but has a totally distorted motivation:

«We have practical experience in discharging our missionary activity that some people come and apply themselves to Kṛṣṇa consciousness with some hidden motive, and as soon as they are economically a little well situated they give up this process and take to their old ways again.» ("Bhagavad-gita", 9.3).

And sometimes their primary motivation relates to the service to the Lord but their motivation is impure. Then such a person's devotional service has certain shades, as Śrīla Prabhupāda says in Śrīmad Bhagavatam, 3.29.8:

«But if one has a motive for personal sense gratification, his devotional service is manifested differently. Such a man may be violent, proud, envious and angry, and his interests are separate from the Lord's.».

This phrase is taken from the commentary on the verses about devotional service in different gunas. There we can also see a general description of the motivation for one's own education in the gunas of passion and ignorance:

«Devotional service executed by a person who is envious, proud, violent and angry, and who is a separatist, is considered to be in the mode of darkness. The worship of Deities in the temple by a separatist, with a motive for material enjoyment, fame and opulence, is devotion in the mode of passion.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.29.8-9).

It is important for a teacher to see not only the activity a student is involved in but also their mood or motive. There are times when a devotee is very actively involved externally, but the motive behind that activity is in the lower gunas.

«A separatist is one who sees his interest as separate from that of the Supreme Lord. Mixed devotees, or devotees in the modes of passion and ignorance, think that the interest of the Supreme Lord is supplying the orders of the devotee; the interest of such devotees is to draw from the Lord as much as possible for their sense gratification. This is the separatist mentality. ... When the devotee has an interest or will different from the interest of the Supreme Lord, his mentality is that of a separatist. When the so-called devotee desires material enjoyment, without reference to the interest of the Supreme Lord, or he wants to become famous or opulent by utilizing the mercy or grace of the Supreme Lord, he is in the mode of passion» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.29.9).

The duty of a teacher is to be able to notice it and to eventually rectify the motive into a transcendent one, but at least into the guna of goodness to begin with:

«When a devotee worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead and offers the results of his activities in order to free himself from the inebrieties of fruitive activities, his devotion is in the mode of goodness. The manifestation of unadulterated devotional service is exhibited when one's mind is at once attracted to hearing the transcendental name and qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is residing in everyone's heart. Just as the water of the Ganges flows naturally down towards the ocean, such devotional ecstasy, uninterrupted by any material condition, flows towards the Supreme Lord.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.29.10-12).

Thus, it is not enough simply to educate a devotee in the right activity, it is necessary to teach them along to work on the motives that are the basis of their consciousness. Only that is real education. Sometimes we very much value the form, but we forget the point that Krishna consciousness is the most important thing in devotional service:

«That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that "I am eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, or God." That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness» (Lecture, 15 November, 1968).

A devotee may perform great ascesis, constantly study the Scriptures, and live the life of a saint. But if one does that without proper guidance and at the same time with a false motive, it will not do them any good. Thus, sometimes we value secondary characteristics in Vaishnavas and then wonder, why some of them leave the movement; and why they not just reduce the intensity of spiritual practice but become aggressive toward their spiritual masters and even toward Śrīla

Prabhupāda. However, such Vaishnavas were never really in Krishna consciousness because their devotional service was intense but in the lower gunas, that is, falsely motivated, while other less noticeable Vaishnavas sometimes have an externally unremarkable but profound devotion to the Lord.

The whole point is very simple, though it is difficult to begin to act accordingly. The point is to internally accept the statement that "I am a servant of the Lord" and desire to serve Him. If a devotee acts in this state of consciousness, their education will succeed. When another motive is present instead of this desire, a person will not make any progress without proper guidance, although externally they may appear to advance.

Now let us look at the statements in the two following quotes:

«Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that even if a devotee wishes the Lord to fulfill a particular desire, the devotee should not be considered a sakāma-bhakta (a devotee with some motive). In the Bhagavad-gītā (7.16) Kṛṣṇa says: "O best among the Bharatas [Arjuna], four kinds of pious men render devotional service unto Me — the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute." The ārta and the arthārthī, who approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead for relief from misery or for some money, are not sakāma-bhaktas, although they appear to be. Being neophyte devotees, they are simply ignorant.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.18.21).

«One who engages in the service of the Lord with some motive is called a sakāma-bhakta, and one who serves the Lord without any motives is called an akāma-bhakta.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.19.27).

At first glance, they may seem contradictory, although they occur in adjoining chapters of Srimad Bhagavatam. But in fact, to understand the subtleties in the differences between these quotes is the key to a more detailed understanding of one's motivation.

It is important to see the difference between a goal, aspiration, and a desire. A goal is the end result of an individual's aspirations, which is the basis of all their activity and resides in the false ego. A desire is a function of the mind, and it directs this or that action toward the satisfaction of the senses. And aspiration is the mind's conscious decision to execute a particular desire.

«This false ego is characterized as the doer, as an instrument and as an effect. <...> From the false ego of goodness, another transformation takes place. From this evolves the mind, whose thoughts and reflections give rise to desire.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.26.26-27).

«Intelligence is the discriminating power to understand an object, and it helps the senses make choices. Therefore intelligence is supposed to be the master of the senses.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.26.29).

For example, if a person travels by car on a distant trip, an object, or action, is the goal to go on the trip. This purpose is the driving fundamental factor of the entire trip, and thus, to all the activities that take place during the trip. Desires represent momentary needs as a part of the trip, such as eating, resting, walking, etc. And aspirations are actions to fulfill some of these desires. Similarly, if we extrapolate this example to a person's entire life, a goal would be something fundamental to all their activities in this world; desires would be the momentary impulses of the mind; and aspirations would be the actions to satisfy those desires.

There is also a difference between a desire, motive, and condition. For example, if we communicate with a person with a desire to buy an apple from him, that is a motive. And if we communicate with a person, and at the same time we also want to eat an apple, that is a desire. If we continue communicating, and we get up to look for an apple simultaneously with the conversation, it is aspiration. And if we want an apple so much that we walk away looking for it and therefore stop communicating with the person, that is a condition; because we would have continued the conversation with that person, if they had given us an apple.

A false goal is the first thing a Vaishnava is purified from, then comes condition, a motive, aspiration, and finally desire. It looks like this within devotional service:

1. (Goal) A devotee is engaged in devotional service, but the internal factor that drives all activities in their life, including devotional service, is their desire for sensual pleasures.
2. (Condition) A devotee is engaged in devotional service, and to attain pure devotional service is the ultimate goal of their life, but their constant desires are so strong that other businesses distract them from the goal.
3. (Motive) A devotee is not distracted from devotional service and is eager to attain ultimately pure devotion, but their material desires are strong, so they subconsciously expect the Lord to fulfill them.
4. (Aspiration) A devotee is not distracted from devotional service and performs it without false motives, that is, the service is their real desire, but their material desires are still strong, so they enjoy the fruits of that service.
5. (Desire) A devotee is not distracted from devotional service and does not seek to enjoy its fruits, but sometimes thoughts of sensual pleasures come into their minds.
6. (Renunciation of the concept of pleasure) A devotee becomes completely absorbed in the thought of the Lord and in the service to Him, and it brings them happiness.
7. (Love) A devotee attains love for God.

Thus, with each step, a devotee is liberated from certain inner obstacles on their path. Each step is associated with the certain stages of spiritual development, during which a Vaishnava works on that obstacle, and a teacher assists them in the process.

In time, a Vaishnava should become liberated from even the concept of sensual pleasures; devotional service should so absorb them with its taste that they will derive happiness from doing devotional service, and the concept of sensual pleasures will simply disappear from their minds. Most

people who are reading these lines have had a brief experience of it, but their challenge now is to extend that experience throughout their lives.

«Pure devotional service as described by Rūpa Gosvāmī is free from all material desires. Anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam. There can be no excuse for personal or material interest. Devotional activities should be transcendental to fruitive activities and empiric philosophical speculation. Pure devotional service is transcendental to all material qualities.» (Srimad Bhagavatam», 3.29.10).

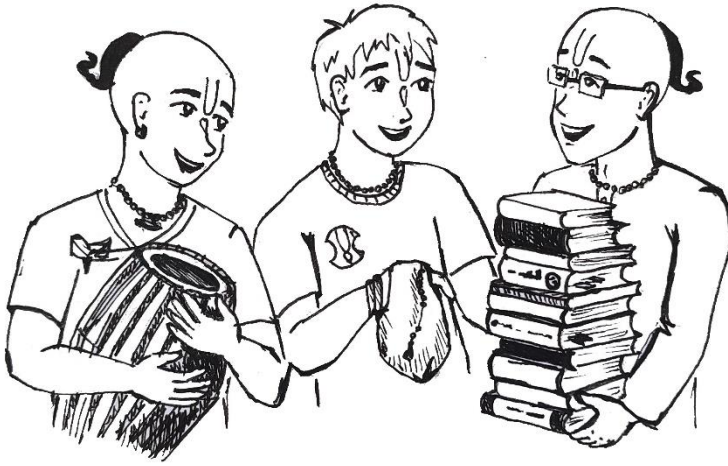
«The word ahaitukī means “without reason.” A pure devotee does not render loving service to the Personality of Godhead for any cause or for any benefit, material or spiritual. This is the first symptom of unalloyed devotion. Anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam: he has no desire to fulfill by rendering devotional service. Such devotional service is meant for the puruṣottama, the Supreme Personality, and not for anyone else. <...> Avyavahitā means “without cessation.” A pure devotee must engage in the service of the Lord twenty-four hours a day, without cessation; his life is so molded that at every minute and every second he engages in some sort of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Another meaning of the word avyavahitā is that the interest of the devotee and the interest of the Supreme Lord are on the same level. The devotee has no interest but to fulfill the transcendental desire of the Supreme Lord. Such spontaneous service unto the Supreme Lord is transcendental and is never contaminated by the material modes of nature. These are the symptoms of pure devotional service, which is free from all contamination of material nature.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.29.11-12).

Common mistakes in the principle of mindfulness:

- misunderstanding of the principles of conscious submission, when education causes devotees to turn off their own consciousness, or they reject it because of their desire to misuse their free will;
- listening with defiance, devoid of devotion, or listening without reciprocal service to the seniors, which must be demonstrated in the service to the mission according to their qualifications and abilities as well as a personal service;
- rejecting the statements of the Scriptures that we do not understand, or accepting them as dogma that is, without trying to understand why and how they are true;
- absence of a culture of inquiry and conscious cultivation of such a culture by the seniors among the juniors;
- premature initiation, when a devotee takes this step unconsciously or with false motives;



- an attempt to reason spiritual subjects logically, based on attitudes and values from other sources **but** not on the Scriptures;
- absence of interactive training for those who are not skilled enough to hear thoroughly and consciously, i.e., to obtain correct realizations only through hearing and subsequent independent reflection;
- to use interactive teaching as a substitute for hearing, rather than a supplement, to engage the subtle body of a devotee more in reflection on what has been heard;
- absence of conscious readiness of devotees to take over the mission from their masters and carry it on independently without their direct participation;
- absence of the atmospheres and educational elements aimed to create deep spiritual samskaras in the minds of devotees; in particular, to engage emotions, even material ones, triggered to increase the desire to serve the Lord;
- absence of work with the motives of a devotee that drive them in their devotional service, namely their goals, conditions, motives, and aspirations; each at the appropriate stage of spiritual development;
- misunderstanding the essence of Krishna consciousness, when a devotee is judged by their external actions rather than their inner consciousness. Although there is usually some correlation between the two, it is not always absolute; therefore, more mature Vaishnavas, who can see the essence behind an external form, should be able to judge by the essence and ensure that the society works accordingly.



Sankirtana

Principle of Sankirtana.

Sankirtana is not a principle universally manifested in the material world. However, it is undoubtedly a principle of the spiritual world, and it is evident from the descriptions of the world of Vaikuntha and from the general principles of the conduct of pure Vaishnavas:

«Translation: The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me. Purport: Pure devotees, whose characteristics are mentioned here, engage themselves fully in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. Their minds cannot be diverted from the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Their talks are solely on the transcendental subjects. The symptoms of the pure devotees are described in this verse specifically. Devotees of the Supreme Lord are twenty-four hours daily engaged in glorifying the qualities and pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Their hearts and souls are constantly submerged in Kṛṣṇa, and they take pleasure in discussing Him with other devotees.» (Bhagavad-gita, 10.9).

Even in the material world, people usually create a kind of sankirtana as they tend to organize society; few humans are inherently hermit-like in nature. In fact, the need for companionship is a manifestation of the natural tendency of living beings to serve others, so that if not the principle itself, its reflection is also ubiquitous in our world of matter.

«Similarly, the eternal function of the eternal living entity cannot be taken from the living entity. Sanātana-dharma is eternally integral with the living entity. ... If we analyze this statement of Lord Caitanya's, we can easily see that every living being is constantly engaged in rendering service to another living being.» (Bhagavad Gita, Introduction).

Apart from that, it is undoubtedly a principle of education, or a principle of spiritual practice brought by Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

«If one has the proper means and wealth, he should occasionally invite the devotees of Lord Caitanya who are engaged in preaching all over the world and hold a festival at home simply by distributing prasādam and talking about Kṛṣṇa during the day and holding congregational chanting for at least three hours in the evening. This procedure must be adopted in all centers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Thus they will daily perform saṅkīrtana-yajṣa. In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.5.32) the daily performance of saṅkīrtana-yajṣa is recommended for this age (yajṣaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ). One should worship Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His four associates, the Paśca-tattva, by distributing prasādam and holding congregational chanting. Indeed, that yajṣa or sacrifice, is most recommended in this Age of Kali. In this age, other yajṣas are not possible to perform, but this yajṣa can be performed everywhere and anywhere without difficulty.» (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā», 3.203).

Of course, it is not meant here that the glorification of the Lord by devotees is limited to three hours of kirtans, although it is important to note that they are the core of all other spiritual activities of Vaishnavas. But meaningful sankirtana takes place when the whole community with all its parts serves to glorify the Lord.

«One must live in the association of devotees, where there is constant chanting and hearing of the glories of the Lord. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is started for this purpose, so that hundreds of ISKCON centers may give people a chance to hear and chant, to accept the spiritual master and to disassociate themselves from persons who are materially interested.» (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.22.23).

To prove by active work and preaching that Lord Sri Krishna is the only enjoyer of all the outcomes of individual and collective sacrifice, penance, meditation, arts, culture, science, because He is the Supreme Proprietor of the whole universe, eternally apart of Him everyone knows Him as a friend. Real peace can be attained when this is realized, in fact. (Constitution of Association, from Srila Prabhupada's diary about ISKCON legal registration).

Therefore, sankirtana means to chant the holy names together, and it extends to all other aspects of communal devotional activity, which also extends to the involvement of innocent living beings in the glorification of the Lord. This is concisely reflected in the following paragraphs of the mission of our society:

To bring together individuals in a Society, regardless of nationality and irrespective of creed or caste, in order to develop a nearness to the Godhead and thereby the idea that within the members and humanity-at-large there is an infinitesimal soul-spirit that is part and parcel in quality with the Godhead, and that all life is meant for the satisfaction of said Godhead, the Supreme Soul. (Constitution of Association, from Srila Prabhupada's diary about ISKCON legal registration).

To encourage the teachings of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu who demonstrated practically the transcendental process of approaching the absolute Personality of Godhead by His acts of

congregational chanting of the holy name of God, a process known as Samkirtan. (Constitution of Association, from Srila Prabhupada's diary about ISKCON legal registration).

Śrīla Prabhupāda made it quite clear that in Kali Yuga to accept the spirit and mood of Lord Chaitanya's mission is a prerequisite for spiritual progress. In other words, one cannot really perform devotional service:

«A living entity must be merciful to other living entities if he wishes to make progress in self-realization. This means he must preach this knowledge after perfecting himself and understanding his own position as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. <...> There are many Vaiṣṇavas in Vṛndāvana who do not like preaching; they chiefly try to imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura. The actual result of their so-called chanting in a secluded place, however, is that they sleep and think of women and money. Similarly, one who simply engages in temple worship but does not see to the interests of the mass of people. (Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.49.1b)

Practical aspects

From the point of view of the manifestation of this principle in life, it is important to discuss this subject in two aspects: positive and non-positive (not to be confused with negative). The positive aspect means to understand the fundamental principles of communication in order to achieve a state of sankirtana in a relationship with each other. And also, as a next step, to extend this culture of relationship to the rest of the world, that is, to realize the essence and spirit of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mission.

«Translation: Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one's mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, accepting prasāda and offering prasāda are the six symptoms of love shared by one devotee and another. Purport: In this verse Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī explains how to perform devotional activities in the association of other devotees.. <...> The International Society for Krishna Consciousness has been established to facilitate these six kinds of loving exchanges between devotees. This Society was started single-handedly, but because people are coming forward and dealing with the give-and-take policy, the Society is now expanding all over the world. <...> The life of the Kṛṣṇa conscious society is nourished by these six types of loving exchange among the members; therefore people must be given the chance to associate with the devotees of ISKCON, because simply by reciprocating in the six ways mentioned above an ordinary man can fully revive his dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness.» (Nectar of Instruction, Text 4).

The non-positive aspect is the ability of devotees to properly overcome internal obstacles on this path, which may cause a desire to isolate from other Vaishnavas

«We should learn to forget and forgive minor incidents because whenever there are two men in a place, there is always some misunderstanding. Such misunderstanding happens even between

husband and wife—what to speak of others. But we have to adjust things on the basis of Krishna Consciousness. We should always remember that K.C. is a challenge to the modern misguided human society, and we have to meet many unfavorable incidents. But if we are sincere to Krishna and the Spiritual Master, combinedly, then everything will be favorably settled.» (SPL to Gargamuni, 11 January, 1968).

«Because the real fact is that if there is any difficulty with others, that is my lack of Krishna consciousness, not theirs. Is this clear?» (SPL to Madhukara, 4 January, 1973).

Both these aspects have already been explored extensively in other places, and therefore there is no point to describe them here.

The positive aspect in relationships that are predominantly in a "senior-junior" mood has been described in other principles in this work. But in addition to it, there are also relationships outside of this category, when communication is in an "equal" mood. And seniority may also be present, but the communication itself occurs in a mood of mutual benefit:

«He should make friendship with other devotees so that by discussing among themselves, they may elevate one another on the path of spiritual understanding. This is called iṣṭa-goṣṭhī.» (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 3.29.17).

«The business of Krishna Conscious persons is to enjoy by mutual association on the basis of understanding Krishna from Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam.» (SPL to Subala, 13 July, 1968).

Unfortunately, the following works I will refer to might not have been translated into English language, but in this particular book I do not cover some of the points as they were elaborately described in those books:

This spirit of communication is explained in detail in the collective work "Creating a Team of Spiritual Leaders" by H.H. Bhaktivedanta Sadhu Swami and H.H. Bhakti Bhagavatamrita Keshava Swami.

The spirit and essence of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission are elaborated upon in the book "Deliberating on Śrīla Prabhupāda's Mission" by H.H. Bhakti Vijnana Goswami.

Both books also have English translation (it might not be perfect), which can be found online in pdf format: <https://bhaktilata.ru/english2>

The aspect of the various difficulties that a Vaishnava is bound to encounter in one's relationship with other devotees as well as constructive scenarios to deal with them are described in another book "Am I being frustrated by ISKCON?", written by me.

In regard to the subject of chanting the holy name as the foundation of sankirtana, it is best for the reader to refer to the relevant books of Śrīla Prabhupāda's quotes (such as "Sri Namamrita"), or the preceding Acharyas (such as "Harinama Chintamani"), or the spiritual teachers of ISKCON (such as "The Ocean of the Holy Name"). They describe the subject of the holy name in much more depth than we could even possibly imagine within this book.

Conclusion

There have been many topics discussed, so let us try to briefly summarize the concept of education in our society .



Definition of education. According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the highest education presents any form of collective or individual pure devotional service. Then education refers to any activity in devotional service, or an activity that leads one closer to it.

Goals of such education. To be more specific, spiritual education:

- a. develops a culture in which devotees' spiritual growth takes place;
- b. inspires faith in pure devotional service, as well as awakens, supports, and strengthens a desire to practice it;
- c. provides necessary values, knowledge, skills, and qualifications to practice pure devotional service and teach others;
- d. generates a voluntary need for sanga of other devotees who wish to engage in pure devotional service, and qualifies to be a part of it;
- e. instils a concept to see everything and everyone as connected to the Lord, as well as an understanding of the importance to connect everything and everyone to His service and methods to do it;
- f. leads to the level of pure love for Lord Krishna.

Principles of Education. Any educational process that meets the above definition and goals is valuable on its own. However, it is successful and effective only to the extent that it corresponds to the following principles. Their names, numbers, and groupings may vary, but one way or another their core must be observed.

[The principle of the spirituality of education is incorporated into the definition and goals of education]

1. **Authoritativeness:** Vaishnava education imparts only the knowledge, skills and values that are based on the teachings of Gaudiya Vaishnavism as presented by Śrīla Prabhupāda, or that are totally consistent with or naturally derived from it.
2. **Practicality:** it leads not to the accumulation of information, but to a profound change of the heart and, consequently, to a change of the conduct in all aspects of life.
3. **Continuity:** it allows anyone to be always involved in education, regardless of personal circumstances.

4. **Systematicity:** it is organized in such a way that everyone can always receive training in a timely manner, form and quantity that is optimum to reach the next level of spiritual development. The system of Vaishnava education should also ensure that all the best knowledge, skills, values, and competencies are preserved, multiplied, developed, and are passed on to the next generations.
5. **Living guidance:** it takes place at every stage under the proper supervision of a qualified devotee or devotees.
6. **Awareness:** the principles of authority and living guidance encourage inner introspection, conscious and voluntary devotion to the Lord and Vaishnava society, and acceptance of responsibility to serve the mission of Lord Chaitanya.
7. **Individuality:** it corresponds to the individual nature and level of each devotee and their fundamental spiritual needs to achieve the goal of the personal spiritual practice of each ISKCON follower, as well as takes into account the individual nature of each person and allows its maximum spiritualization, occupation and development in the educational process.
8. **Sankirtana:** Vaishnava education provides ISKCON followers with all the necessary training to be successful in ISKCON's mission individually and collectively as it is defined by Śrīla Prabhupāda. In other words, Vaishnava education is communal: that is, it inspires a voluntary need to serve a pure Vaishnava community, qualifies one to be a part of it, and demonstrates the best principles of communality in practice; it is missional: that is, it fosters the spirit of service to Śrīla Prabhupāda's preaching mission and an understanding of participation in it as an integral part of personal spiritual growth; it is universal: that is, it effectively engages everything and everybody in the devotional service to the Lord.

Some may have a reasonable question: what is next? Indeed, we may agree with the book, but now what to do with it? A considerable number of possible deviations and deficiencies to follow the above-mentioned goals and principles were indicated in the book. But they were not mentioned merely to be voiced. The author of this book hopes that it will make it easier for the devotees associated with education be they educators, teachers, preachers, mentors, community or project leaders, regional secretaries, or other types of leaders, to audit their education or service. Whether on their own with their associates and colleagues, or under the supervision of someone more experienced, they will be inspired to look as objectively as possible at the process they are involved in, find areas for improvement, and figure out how to transform them so that the process of spiritual education becomes fully effective. And the Vaishnava Education Department of the Centre for Krishna Consciousness Societies in Russia will endeavour to facilitate it.

You might wait as long as you like for an offering to the Lord to be cooked on a switched-off stove, but as long as the process is broken, nothing will happen. But once you fix it - turn on the stove - everything will start working.

And since there is much work ahead of us all, albeit extremely rewarding and sometimes challenging, I would like to conclude with an inspiring quote that describes Śrīla Prabhupāda's universal vision, which implementation we can take part in:

One may raise the question how all three worlds became inundated with love of Kṛṣṇa, since Caitanya Mahāprabhu performed kīrtana only in the Navadvīpa area. The answer is that Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself. The entire cosmic manifestation results from the Lord's first setting it in motion. Similarly, since the saṅkīrtana movement was first set in motion five hundred years ago by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's desire that it spread all over the universe, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, in continuity of that same motion, is now spreading all over the world, and in this way it will gradually spread all over the universe. With the spread of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, everyone will merge in an ocean of love of Kṛṣṇa. (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adi-lila, 13.32)