



Two Saris, Two Dhotis

The Case for Gay Marriage and Acceptance in ISKCON



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Foreword

It may be noted that just as “man” and “mankind” generally includes “woman” and “womankind” so the colloquial term “gay” has often come to mean “gay and lesbian” and for brevity, I often use it in this sense. I have used these terms in preference to “homosexual” when describing individuals, only because they indicate a friendlier tone.

Introduction

I am writing this book not exactly to promote gay marriage, as I believe, as Shakespeare did of the rose, that whatever name we choose to call a thing does not change its essence. If two people commit to making every aspect of their lives successful, up to and including the topmost desirable goal of life, the lotus feet of Krsna, then we can call it “marriage” “civil union” “partnership” “cabbages” or “watermelons” it will not stop or in any way deter those two people from continuing to blissfully and successfully pursue their spiritual life and being mutually supportive in the endeavor.

Of course, the converse is also true. Just by a union being heterosexual, socially approved, made in front of the dieties, with the help of a priest, sanctioned by the fire, sanctified by mantra, made at an auspicious time, and for our Indian members, arranged by parents, etc does not make it one step closer to the spiritual definition of marriage if the couple are not mutually and wholeheartedly committed to the above-mentioned goal and all the support work that goes with it. This includes the material and emotional well-being of each other, and the interface between the two- which is how to deal with material challenges in ways that support our continued growth in love for Lord Krsna, seeing His hand in everything.

My goal in writing this book is to slow or stem the tide of nasty, rude, insulting and downright mean and ignorant comments so common on the internet. My aim as a vaisnava writer is to elevate the consciousness of those who I see floundering in their spiritual lives due to a continuous unrelenting stream of offenses made to our very sincere gay and lesbian devotees who have surrendered no less of every fibre of their beings than the rest of us to the lotus feet of our sweet and captivating Lord, who only is interested in what bhakti we can offer Him. Even if it is a simple tulasi leaf.

My aim as a would-be vaisnava writer therefore follows, or aims to follow, each of the four approved devotee dealings for one struggling to become a madhyama. First we are advised to avoid the envious and hateful. There are no exceptions made for the envious and hateful wearing nice and perfectly applied tilaka, kunti mala and chanting 16 rounds, without fail, of perfectly pronounced nama aparadha, for Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura in his Bhajana Rahasya has warned us that the materialist in vaisnava

dress is to be avoided at all cost- his association is poisonous, worse than an outright materialist.

Such an example is that person- if we can grace him with that word- who even after hearing all good arguments to the contrary- said of gay devotees “Not near my kids, no way!”. I hope my book will inspire someone to distance themselves from such people and not take their association.

Secondly, I hope to reach what I hope is the majority of devotees who are on the line, sometimes getting swayed by the pathetic arguments of the hateful and hurtful, or who are maybe even sucked into their vortex but are not yet utterly swept away by the currents. May the all-powerful Lord Krsna bless me that some of them can be influenced. Chapter 8 will deal with the seriousness of vaisnava aparadha. Mainly this book is for them.

Thirdly, it is written most happily to share solidarity with all the wonderful devotees, who inhabit bodies of the gay and lesbian type, who I feel very blessed to have had the association of in the past and hope to do so in the future. Many of them I feel awed and humbled by. Out of friendship with them, I feel as offended by all the verbal vomit as they are.

The other aim of writing the book, is to gain the blessings and association of more advanced devotees, whose mercy I am so desperately in need of, and whose blessings I sought in this endeavor. If they are pleased, I hope that they will continue to bless me with their sanga, seva and siksa.

The First Sanity Sun-Shower: Why Gay “Marriage” and Not “Civil Union”?

As mentioned in the intro and as Shakespeare said “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet” it may be wondered as to why should I push the issue at all, since names do not matter, or at least do not change the essence of a thing nor detract from its beneficial characteristics.

With all due respect for Shakespeare, he was a bit of a hypocrite, he who so well knew the beauty and power of words and was famous for it. Some words encourage, enliven and inspire, bringing forth love, courage, dedication or hope, while other words crush, intimidate, marginalize or demonize. Then there are other words like “civil union” which are coldly neutral and have none of the loving context of “marriage”- vowing to be there for each other in fortune and misfortune, vowing to maintain fidelity and trust, even when tested to the extreme, vowing to stay supportive of each other, even when it is not easy to do so, the initial infatuation having worn off long ago, vowing not to kill the mother-in-law. In the spiritual context, it also means vowing to make Krsna one's common object of love and affection.

Not openly acknowledging that gay and lesbian devotees, are just as capable of being true to these vows as the rest of us (though we not always are) is to deny the clear and plain evidence that these devotees are just as soft-hearted, tolerant of other's faults and dedicated to life's highest goal as the rest of us hopefully are- all qualities that we need to have, or develop, in due course, in order to make the marriage successful.

Suggesting that the relationship our gay devotees have with each other is anything less than that, by use of a word implying much less, is like calling a fragrant rose, a dandelion. It won't affect the rose or the dandelion- but its not the definition of being truthful either. And since people are not flowers, their feelings can be hurt, so on top of a lack of honesty on our part, which is an anartha (kutinati) we have shackled ourselves with vaisnava aparadha.

Furthermore, the “Who cares what word we call it?” argument is defeated by the very idea of taking vows, which are nothing more than words. Words have power. They have so much power, they are like mantras backfiring when we use them, in any way, to hurt.

At this point, it may be asked why did I state in the beginning that I am not out to promote gay marriage, when all of the above is in support of it? My stated aim is to stop the rising tide of foul-smelling mud disgracing the internet- people are not usually so insulting in person, probably because they are cowards. Nevertheless, most of communication is non-verbal, and thus attitudes, a look or an exclusive attitude can be just as crushing or more so, to a sensitive well-balanced individual than a barrage of outright insults- at least the latter is straightforward.

By showing how even the most liberal all-embracing viewpoint is entirely within the Krsna consciousness standards, teachings and example set by our founder-acarya, then it will hopefully make it clear to everyone but those sold out to hate and the bodily concept of life, that the verbal diarrhea currently out there is utterly unsanctioned and uncalled for, and that such offenses to our dear godbrothers and godsisters must stop, from this day forward.

I think I have made my reasons for writing this book clear. Now let's jump in, boots and all, getting down to the nitty and the gritty, hard-core bash-Prabhupada-on-your-head stuff. May all who read with an open heart and mind achieve, one day, the dust of his soft lotus toes now treading the pathways of

Vraja behind the heart-melting soft, sweet and captivating Lord Gopala!



The Second Sanity Sun-shower

“The Demon Within Us All”

It shocks me how often and how blithely that devotees use the word “demon” in situations where our acaryas never did. Why they do that, becomes clear when we consider the power of words, mentioned in the last chapter.

We should be very careful to use words only for conveying “truth, for the benefit of all” and not for augmenting our sense of self-importance and/or self righteousness. While the sastra does indeed make defining distinctions between divine and demoniac natures, it does so for our benefit, so we can choose the former, and eschew the latter. This choosing and eschewing is in terms of what is within and without us. We learn to reject the demoniac propensities inside our hearts, born from unlimited attachments to sense objects, and accept all those qualities we have which are favorable to pure devotional service (sattva guna). We do the same in regard to association. The wrong use of the sastra is to wrap ourselves in her authority and borrow her language for something other than what it was intended...

What does the word “demon” mean? The Bhagavad gita defines it thus:

The demoniac person thinks: "So much wealth do I have today, and I will gain more according to my schemes. So much is mine now, and it will increase in the future, more and more. He is my enemy, and I have killed him; and my other enemy will also be killed. I am the lord of everything. I am the enjoyer. I am perfect, powerful and happy. I am the richest man, surrounded by aristocratic relatives. There is none so powerful and happy as I am. I shall perform sacrifices, I shall give some charity, and thus I shall rejoice." In this way, such persons are deluded by ignorance.

Clearly, this is all about power, and misusing it to boost one's own sense of false prestige at the cost of others. Isn't that what we do when we use the word “demon” on other devotees? To yield the vibration “demon” against another devotee places one in the role of a respected judge, passing down a sentence on a condemned prisoner. Is that what we are supposed to do to each other, as indicated in the prayers “vancha kalpa tarubhyas ca”?

Since the Bhagavad Gita verse is clearly about the negative use of power to lord it over others, if we want to actually be devotees and avoid the demoniac nature, we should be extremely careful to never misuse the power of words to gain an edge over others by denigrating them in any way, whatsoever. If we actually want to be devotees, we should strive to do the opposite- choose our words carefully so they have the effect of elevating others, so that others can become greater than ourselves, by pushing them upwards.

Srila Prabhupada did this when he encouraged raw neophytes to open centers, and become preachers, taking responsibility for others spiritual lives. He always encouraged his disciples that they could do what would ordinarily be considered impossible. He specifically told Tamal Krsna that he wanted his disciples to excel him. Thus, he used words in an empowering sense- a sense completely devoid of envy and the desire to control and lord it over others. It is the sense of the servant “Be more powerful than I am- because I just want to serve you!”

Certain words have greater or lesser power in any given situation. For a materially successful person,

the word “incompetent” yields the greatest power to deflate and discourage. For an academically gifted person, “stupid” would have the same effect. For a devotee, it is “demon” and “demoniac”.

Hungry after power, we feel satiated when we use the word “demon” against other devotees. Thus, instead of saying “materialist in vaisnava dress” to describe a materialistic devotee, as Bhaktivinode Thakura did, we often hear devotees say “demons in the dress of vaisnavas”. After all, we are all materialistic to a greater or lesser extent- it is not a very powerful criticism. But to say someone is a demon in vaisnava dress puts them on a level with Pralambasura, the enemy of vaisnavas.

We should be aware of the crushing weight that some words have to complete pull out from under one's feet any standing that one hoped to have in Krsna's eyes, in Krsna's service, in His society of devotees...There is nothing so devastating for a devotee to be called a “demon” for the latter is the exact opposite of everything we aspire to be. It is like emptying a truckload of hopelessness onto the fragile psyche, obliterating enthusiasm, determination and so on, and denying us the practical meaning of “causeless” mercy.

Srila Prabhupada never used the word “demoniac” on even those of his disciples who were hungry after power, possessing the very definition of what it is to be that word, what to speak of gay and lesbian devotees who eschew power and prestige and are possessed of all good qualities... He did not treat such devotees as anyway inferior or less advanced than his other devotees- giving many of them positions of respect and authority in the movement. We should follow his example, of course, and not discriminate or fail to offer respect and honor to every devotee, regardless of their sexual orientation. We should not use his words as an excuse not to follow his example of loving inclusion- this is only possible when we do not understand them, for Srila Prabhupada, as an acarya, lived the philosophy he taught us.

If he said “be kind to every living entity” and “especially be kind and friendly to every devotee” he would show it by his every word and deed. If he did not make exceptions because of sexual orientation, it is because there are none. In this light, which is the very light of what an acarya is, we will now examine certain words of Srila Prabhupada which specifically seem to inspire in some devotees qualities so different from those embodied by him- qualities such as meanness, hatred and exclusion. That Srila Prabhupada embodied no such thing, it must mean that his words are being grossly misunderstood.

We must understand them properly in order to apply them properly.

The Third Sanity Sun-shower

The Purport to SB 3.20.26- Context

Srila Prabhupada taught that as preachers, we are to distinguish between the divine and demoniac natures, yet as a preacher he made no distinction between gay, lesbian and straight devotees, giving them the same challenges, responsibilities and positions of authority in the Krsna consciousness movement. And yet in the purport to SB 3.20.26, he describes the homosexual appetite as being “demoniac”. Can such a judgment be applied to devotees? Did Srila Prabhupada act differently to what he believed in?

A purport should always be viewed in terms of the text it is describing. It is, after all, a purport on the text, not on some innocent bhakta we would have obliterated on account of his bodily type. The surrounding text is herein provided.

3.20.23

Lord Brahmā then gave birth to the demons from his buttocks, and they were very fond of sex. Because they were too lustful, they approached him for copulation.

Sex life is the background of material existence. Here also it is repeated that demons are very fond of sex life. The more one is free from the desires for sex, the more he is promoted to the level of the demigods; the more one is inclined to enjoy sex, the more he is degraded to the level of demoniac life.

3.20.24

The worshipful Brahmā first laughed at their stupidity, but finding the shameless asuras close upon him, he grew indignant and ran in great haste out of fear.

Sexually inclined demons have no respect even for their father, and the best policy for a saintly father like Brahmā is to leave such demoniac sons.

3.20.26

Lord Brahmā, approaching the Lord, addressed Him thus: My Lord, please protect me from these sinful demons, who were created by me under Your order. They are infuriated by an appetite for sex and have come to attack me.

It appears here that the homosexual appetite of males for each other is created in this episode of the creation of the demons by Brahmā. In other words, the homosexual appetite of a man for another man is demoniac and is not for any sane male in the ordinary course of life.

3.20.29

The body given up by Brahmā took the form of the evening twilight, when the day and night meet, a time which kindles passion. The asuras, who are passionate by nature, dominated as they are by the element of rajās, took it for a damsel, whose lotus feet resounded with the tinkling of anklets, whose eyes were wide with intoxication and whose hips were covered by fine cloth, over which shone a girdle.

3.20.31

Adorned with dark tresses, she hid herself, as it were, out of shyness. Upon seeing that girl, the asuras were all infatuated with an appetite for sex.

The difference between demons and demigods is that a beautiful woman very easily attracts the minds of demons, but she cannot attract the mind of a godly person. A godly person is full of knowledge, and a demoniac person is full of ignorance. Just as a child is attracted by a beautiful doll, similarly a demon, who is less intelligent and full of ignorance, is attracted by material beauty and an appetite for sex. The godly person knows that this nicely dressed and ornamented attraction of high breasts, high hips, beautiful nose and fair complexion is *māyā*. All the beauty a woman can display is only a combination of flesh and blood. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya has advised all persons not to be attracted by the interaction of flesh and blood; they should be attracted by the real beauty in spiritual life. The real beauty is Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. One who is attracted by the beauty of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa cannot be attracted by the false beauty of this material world. That is the difference between a demon and a godly person or devotee.

3.20.35 pp Demons arrange many kinds of performances to see the glaring beauty of a beautiful woman.

From these surrounding texts and purports it is abundantly clear that the defining characteristic of the demoniac nature discussed herein is not homosexuality, but lust. The text is about the creation of demons by Brahma, and in the context of which it was spoken, it is about uncontrolled lust in persons who are heterosexual, as the demons created first pursued Lord Brahman for sex, then the female he had created....

Since the verse refers to heterosexual persons with uncontrolled lust, including- but not limited to- an insatiable homosexual appetite, the “demoniac” homosexual appetite referred to by Srila Prabhupada should not be applied to people who do not possess uncontrolled lust or an insatiable appetite, as that would be misleading. To take this or any other statement of Srila Prabhupada's out of the context in which it was used, is a trait only those with a preconceived agenda engage in, not those wholly and solely after truth.

Srila Prabhupada, in commenting on Bhagavad gita, specifically defines the word “demon” in regard to uncontrolled lust: “The demon's lust is never satiated. They will go on increasing and increasing their insatiable desires for material enjoyment.”

If insatiable lust were not the defining symptom of being “demoniac” if it was just being “homosexual” then why are those of the demoniac nature described in this verse in terms of heterosexuality- being inclined to chase both men and women for the purpose of rape? It is the same reason why the Bhagavad Gita again and again brings up the word “lust” and not the word “homosexuality” in relation to being demoniac. Homosexuality, like working to make large amounts of money, may be an expression of lust, but it is absolutely not a defining factor. The defining factor is insatiable desire- and being sold out to fulfilling it.

Clearly, Srila Prabhupada knew his gay devotees were not in this category, and therefore, he did not apply the demoniac definition, or in any way insinuate that there were different or lesser than straight devotees. He treated them as devotees, very sincere devotees- and not demons. Therefore it is clear that the homosexual appetite, when devoid of the insatiable lust categorized by the nature of demons, is no more demoniac than the heterosexual appetite. Sexual appetite of both types simply means sexual

desire, which is a perverted reflection of our natural love for Kṛṣṇa. When we become sold out to fulfilling it, even at the cost of others, when we make that our aim of life, being ignorant of our real self-interest and lost to ourselves, we may be categorized as demons. When we are sold out to converting the same desire to love for Kṛṣṇa, being absorbed in His enthralling beauty, thinking of His sweet voice, His soft lotus feet, His soft curly hair, His charming glance, and so on, we convert the same propensity to fall in love, directing it towards the eternal husband, perfect child and loving friend of the soul.

For this reason, Srila Prabhupada treated his gay disciples with exactly the same degree of acknowledgment of their sincerity as devotees as his other disciples. So should we. We should keep the purport to 3.20.26 as a purport for which it was intended- a purport about demons and insatiable lust, with the homosexual appetite being an expression of that, in persons who are heterosexual in nature. When insatiable lust and the other demoniac propensities are absent, and surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and other symptoms of the divine nature are present, as in the case of our gay and lesbian devotees, it is a gross miscarriage of justice to regard this verse as applicable. It is also hurtful and devastating to the heart. We should avoid all such malicious and damaging misuse of the sastra, for to use it thus is to engage in the actual nature of demons.

Fourth Sanity Sun-shower

Purport to SB 3.20.26- Acquired or Inherent?

It may be argued that the verse may not be about the homosexual appetite being demoniac, but Srila Prabhupada clearly stated it as such, and so we should just accept that. But unlike us, Srila Prabhupada made no distinction between his gay and his straight devotees. He did not consider them demoniac at all, just very sincere devotees. From this we can conclude what limits we are bound with, in such a consideration. We are not to apply it to our devotees. A devotee does not have a demoniac nature- it is a conflict of terms.

It is also clear that he considered the homosexual appetite as something that is acquired and that homosexuality is a choice that one could give up in due course with appropriate action or re-conditioning behavior, such as by marrying someone of the opposite sex, which is actually what he suggested his gay disciples do.

His own choice of words describing the homosexual condition, indicates the same: "It is not to be considered by any sane man in the ordinary course of events" The word "considered" refers to a choice that is being considered, and the word "ordinary" can only refer to what is considered ordinary for a man. "Sane" again refers to a normal condition of the psyche.

In addition, he chose to place the topic of homosexuality in a purport to a verse that, by our definition, is about heterosexuality. Only heterosexual males are capable of being attracted to the opposite gender. As the creation of a female "cured" the heterosexual males of their wrong attraction, so it was believed, even up to very recent times, that homosexuality was something that was acquired and could thus be disposed of, not a genetically determined condition.

This was the understanding even up until a few years ago.

Finally, as recently as 2012, with the mapping of the human genome finally complete, a "significant link" between sexual orientation and genetics was established:

Results from the first large, comprehensive multi-center genetic linkage study of male sexual orientation were reported by an independent group of researchers at the American Society of Human Genetics in 2012.[18] The study population included 409 independent pairs of gay brothers, who were analyzed with over 300,000 single-nucleotide polymorphism markers. The data strongly replicated Hamer's Xq28 findings as determined by both two-point and multipoint (MERLIN) LOD score mapping. Significant linkage was also detected in the pericentromeric region of chromosome 8, overlapping with one of the regions detected in the Hamer lab's previous genomewide study. The authors concluded that "our findings, taken in context with previous work, suggest that genetic variation in each of these regions contributes to development of the important psychological trait of male sexual orientation." Genome-wide linkage scan of male sexual orientation. A. R. Sanders, K. Dawood, G. Rieger, J. A. Badner, E. S. Gershon, R. S. Krishnappa, A. B. Kolundzija, S. Guo, G. W. Beecham, E. R. Martin, J.M. Bailey⁸, Abstract 1957T

How could Srila Prabhupada have predicted future knowledge of the material science of human genetics? Operating on the knowledge extant at the time of writing, Srila Prabhupada concluded, as everyone did back then, that homosexuality is a choice, resulting from excessive or misplaced lust, and as wrong choices can be rectified, so can it be, by making the "right" decision- heterosexual marriage. Thus, his response to his gay disciple's dilemma was to have them married to opposite-sex partners, which turned out, of course, a complete failure.

If we follow something Srila Prabhupada said, just because he said it, even if it doesn't make sense or even if it, in due course, fails to have the desired outcome, then we are, by definition, following him blindly. He many times discouraged his disciples from such blind following, most notably in the purport to Bg 4.34, which is about surrendering to a self-realized soul:

In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned.

In the same spirit, on this morning walk, Srila Prabhupada tests the faith of his followers, admonishing them for blindness:

Prabhupada saw a nice car and said, "Some day we will have for Krishna car like this!"

Disciples: Jai Prabhupada!

Prabhupada saw a big dog and said, "Some day we will have such a dog like this for Krishna!"

Disciples: Jai Prabhupada!

Then Srila Prabhupada looked at his disciples and strictly admonished, "You are fools! Why dog for Krishna? Try to use your intelligence. Do not accept everything blindly."

Our following Srila Prabhupada should therefore be based on seeing faith- not blind faith. If Srila Prabhupada says something that is not true according to our understanding, such as being able to use a dog in Krsna's service, we are not obliged to accept it. He would not want us to. Similarly, we are not obliged to accept Srila Prabhupada's understanding of homosexuality when current studies on the subject, and the experience of every day life, prove it wrong.

Homosexuality, as opposed to homosexual experimentation by heterosexual people, is not the result of excessive lust- it is not a choice and it is a bodily condition one is born with. It does not, therefore, fall into any of the categories of demoniac action referred to in the Bhagavad gita and Srimad Bhagavatam, all of which imply the use- or rather- misuse of power and desire, and all of which thus hinge on one's personal choices, as opposed to one's body and the conditioning thereof.

There is no meaning to having a "demoniac" nature or appetite, unless there is choice involved. Therefore animals are never described as "demoniac" even though some animals take part in torturing and maiming other animals. The human condition has some choice, but not complete choice. That which we have no control over cannot be classified as demoniac. We do not choose whether we are attracted to sense objects, how much we are attracted, nor how we are attracted.

We do choose how we will deal with that attraction. When we use it solely for exploitation, and without any sense of limitation or responsibility, as in the case of the demons in Srimad Bhagavatam, then we are engaging our conditioned propensities in a demoniac way, and those same propensities, being influenced by our choices, may then be called "demoniac" When we choose to channel our attraction in a way that will please Krsna, either by offering that sweet rice and honoring it, or by marrying that person and honoring him or her as Krsna's servant, then even though we may still be engaged in satisfying our material propensities, it is not demoniac, as it is with a sense of full knowledge of relationship with Krsna- the sweet rice is His, and so is that person!

Therefore, Srila Prabhupada recommended marriage as a solution to the problem of lust. Marriage in the sense of being a spiritual ashrama, grhastha, implies taking responsibility to help another advance in consciousness of Krsna. It is not a license for sense gratification even under the rationalization of making Krsna conscious babies. We are advised to see the other person not as a sense object, but

beloved servant of our mutually beloved Lord Krsna.

Engaging with our spouses in that way means mutually satisfying spiritual exchanges which lift the consciousness of both partners to the platform of transcendence. Gradually our love for that person becomes less of the perverted reflected type, as our rati for sense objects is replaced by our relish of topics related to the ever-fresh and charming nama, rupa and lila of Krsna. The association in the household then becomes gradually of the nature of sadhu sanga. It goes without saying that such is as possible for a gay couple as a straight couple.

The only difference, of course, is that Krsna conscious children cannot be produced out of a gay marriage- or can they? Is it sex which produces a Krsna conscious child- or Krsna katha by Krsna conscious people whose only desire is to see the child advance in Krsna consciousness, and thus love him or her on all levels- spiritually, physically and emotionally?

Even in such a Krsna conscious household, however, fall down may be possible and even likely. This is true and indeed is a daily reality for both gay and heterosexual relationships. How Srila Prabhupada dealt with the problem of devotee fall down will be examined in the next chapter. It was in complete accord with his loving, all-inclusive nature.

Fifth Sanity Sun-shower

“Force Will Not Work”

In the following quotes and many others, we see that Srila Prabhupada acknowledged the uselessness of enforcing sense regulation, even by the guru upon the disciple:

“Force is not good, because a decision made under force will not stand. For example, we advise our students to rise early in the morning. But I do not force anyone. I may force them for one or two days, but if they do not practice it, then force is useless.” (Bg lecture, London, 1973)

Dr. Patel: In our Vaisnava religions this vidhi-nisedha is a must, right from the beginning.
Prabhupāda: Yes. It is must. It is must. But you cannot force in the beginning. That is not possible.
Morning walk, Sept 30, Bombay

Srila Prabhupada acknowledged that force is useless, also in regard to the attempts of his students to be celibate in their marriages:

Srila Prabhupāda: Not everybody. Why are you misunderstanding? Varnashrama means not everybody brahmana.

Hari-Sauri: But in our society, practically everyone is being raised to that platform.

Srila Prabhupāda: Everyone is being raised, but they are falling down.

Srila Prabhupāda: Vaishnava, to become a vaishnava is not so easy. If to become a vaisnava is so easy, why so many fall down?

His concern was to make everyone Krsna conscious:

Srila Prabhupāda: We must pave the situation in such a way that gradually they will promoted to the spiritual platform. Therefore varnashrama dharma is required. Simply showbottle will not do.

Srila Prabhupada's solution to the problem of the falldown of his married couples was not to pretend that the falldown is not there and keep them in the exalted position of brahmanas, for that would be showbottle life only. Nor was it to exclude them just because they weren't up to the mark of sense control. It was to include them, under the umbrella of love and acceptance, and not in the sense of being less capable as devotees or less capable of perfection:

Srila Prabhupāda: I want everyone to become a brahmana. But because he is a sudra it is not possible to bring him immediately to the platform of brahmana or vaishnava. Therefore falling down. Therefore system must be. But even if he is a sudra, he is a vaisnava.

His last sentence points to an essential fact, which is written about in detail in our acarya's books. Vairagya, detachment, is not essential for bhakti, and artificial attempts at it make produce dry renunciation or hard-heartedness.

BRS (1.2.249) Because jnana and vairagya generally make the heart hard, the authoritative devotees have concluded that bhakti alone, whose nature is very tender, is the cause of entering into bhakti.

BRS (1.2.254) If a person has a taste for worshiping the Lord, even if he has strong material attractions, those attractions will be the most part destroyed during sadhana without resorting to vairagya.

Jiva Goswami's commentary: Previously vairagya was condemned at the beginning of bhakti because it causes the heart to become hard. However, if vairagya is forbidden, the person practicing bhakti will be filled with material desires, and having such desires is against the scriptures, for it is said:

The person absorbed in material enjoyment is far from being absorbed in Krsna. How can a person going east catch an object moving to the west?

To answer this dilemma, the author supplies this verse. Having a taste for bhakti will destroy attachment to material objects. Thus, the hardness of the heart caused by the practice of vairagya will not take place., and still detachment will manifest”

It should never be a prerequisite. That is simply wrong, because the soul is comprised of senses which always seek engagement. To the extent the soul has experienced a higher taste of sensory engagement in relation to the all-attractive Personality of Godhead, to that extent he can give up lower tastes, without any artificial repression, which hardens the heart. Therefore, vairagya is encouraged only when it is a byproduct of bhakti.

Therefore the vaisnava guru, when he sees vairagya not automatically manifesting as a result of the sadhana of his sisya, does not try to impose his authority over him, to force him into repression. It will not work, and if it does, it does so in a way that is inimical to bhakti. He works out a way that they can gradually approach pure Krsna consciousness, without pretension.

This means that if one can follow all the principles Srila Prabhupāda introduced when he first started up the Krsna consciousness movement, and do that without falldown, then one can stay in the position intended by him. One does so by following those principles, for one's nature is suited for brahminical pursuits, being peaceful and naturally drawn to a higher level of engagement.

If one cannot, then one stays married or gets married, follows as best one can, and chooses a varna which reflects one's conditioning in the modes of nature- honestly. It is easy to be honest in a loving and all-inclusive society, because you are not judged or looked down upon for your shortcomings.

If one has ideal character and is very caring and protective of other people needs, that varna would be as a ksatriya. If one is expert in business, or can look after animals very well, vaisya. If one is creative with art, craft or strong and inclined to physical work, sudra.

This is not caste-ism, because “Even he is a sudra, he is a vaisnava” We have to keep that in mind. Just because a person is not particularly good at sense control, he may be a better vaisnava than us- because of his purer or more intense devotion. Such intense devotion will burn away all his obstacles in due course, whereas we, in judging him, may commit aparadha. Thus we can head in different directions- ours in an undesirable one.

A person who is dedicated completely to the Lord may show externally, serious contamination (but internally he is pure). The full moon, though marked by the figure of a rabbit, is never overcome by darkness. BRS, 1.3.60

Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

A person may show serious contamination. This means that it is seen externally that he performs forbidden activities. However, he shines with internal bhakti, which cannot be defeated by anyone. A particular case, the moon, is introduced to support the general principle.

This is called arthantara-nyāsa. In the Hari-varṇśa, it is said:

The dark spot on the moon is called a rabbit. Though there is a fault in the beauty of the moon, that fault is only superficial.

Thus, we have seen that one's devotion is all-important, more important than being able to give up all forbidden activities, which one naturally comes to detest, the more one has of it. We have examined sastric evidence that such detachment is a by-product, not prerequisite for bhakti. That being so, lack of sense control should never be a prerequisite for being given complete shelter, protection and acceptance from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and an attitude of loving inclusion and acceptance from its members, as required by the six loving exchanges between devotees outlined in our sastra.

Furthermore, ISKCON is obliged to follow the example set by its founder-acarya, Srila Prabhupada, who exemplified the above Vedic teaching in two ways- in his loving inclusion of fallen devotees of two types- heterosexual and gay- and affording both categories exactly the same respect and responsibility.

Sixth Sanity Sun-Shower

No Reasonable, Compassionate Alternative

Srila Prabhupada clearly recommended heterosexual marriage for his heterosexual disciples, and his gay and lesbian ones as well, so it may be argued that any recommendation of gay marriage goes against his wishes. He never recommended gay marriage as a solution, indeed, many times he criticized the very concept.

However, his program of marrying gay devotees to straight devotees of the opposite sex, as if their homosexuality were a condition that could be cured, was a complete and utter failure- none of these marriages worked, and imagine the indignity of the straight partner, when they learned that their partner was gay! For a woman, it would be exactly like finding out they had married a woman, and for a man, a man.

This leaves us in a quandary. If heterosexual marriage does not work for gay people, then what does? We see Srila Prabhupada never recommended artificial restraint- he said it would not work. Nearly all his disciples became married in due course, and he encouraged that, as a progressive and gradual means to control the senses. It goes without saying that he much preferred such a solution to promiscuity and sexual indulgences outside of marriage.

If gay people cannot marry straight people of the opposite gender, and if they cannot reasonably remain eternally celibate either, then we are left with two solutions only- either gay marriage or gay promiscuity. Srila Prabhupada never recommended promiscuity in any situation, and neither do any of the sastras on morality. They are in complete concord that such a path leads only to hell, and psychologically we see that those people who indulge in uncommitted sexual affairs are prone to depression and loneliness. So, such a course of action is hell, both in this life, and the next.

Furthermore, such uncommitted sex leads to the spread of physical disease such as AIDS. Some of our gay devotees have died from these diseases. If they were married and committed to one person, it is almost certain this would not have happened- as AIDS is linked to the number of sexual partners, not their sexuality. Therefore, for the spiritual, psychological and physical well-being of our gay devotees, it is absolutely essential to encourage and provide facility for gay marriage.

To do that, we need to make it a respectable institution, with all the vows and commitments, the promises, the fanfare, and the public and divine witnessing that accompanies a straight marriage ceremony. It should be celebrated, as marriages are, and rightly so. Marriage is a celebration of the human spirit to rise above the animal propensity to exploit other's bodies simply for sexual satisfaction- it acknowledges the need for care, continued commitment, selflessness, putting the other person's needs before one's own, and doing so day after day, for one's whole life. It acknowledges the totality of a person- their emotional, intellectual and spiritual identity, and places that over and above their ability to attract one's senses- especially as they age and become less attractive or sexually potent. It also encompasses the extremely difficult vow/promise of fidelity- that in the world of unlimited attractions and affected as I am by lust, I will never allow myself to have sex with any other person- because it would hurt you. Such a commitment goes against all our animal instincts. Thus, marriage is the triumph of the human spirit. It is a severe restriction of the sexual appetite- to one person only. In terms of the path of bhakti, it is also restrained further, when one or both of the partners become strengthened by spiritual practice and determined to follow all the rules completely. This happens naturally in due

course.

Still, there will be some devotees who reasonably argue that Srila Prabhupada vehemently opposed the idea of gay marriage, and so should we. If we follow him in also vehemently opposing gay marriage, in complete ignorance of the consequences, up to and including the death of some of our devotees from AIDS, then we are most certainly following him blindly- with eyes shut tightly to the consequences. There is another way to follow Srila Prabhupada -with a complete and sold-out sense of loyalty and utter trust in him. It is with eyes open to the consequences.

In this respect, Srila Prabhupada once told a story. Once upon a time there was a veterinarian who had an apprentice, who accompanied him to a certain case of a horse, with a huge swollen throat. By way of curing the horse, the veterinarian took a large sledge hammer and smashed the horse's throat, after which the horse recovered. The apprentice got the brilliant idea to follow his master and the perfect opportunity came when his friend's horse developed a similarly large and swollen throat. He took a sledge hammer and smashed the throat of the horse, but instead of curing it, he promptly killed it. His master later explained to him that the horse whose throat he had smashed had a watermelon stuck in it. The one visited by the apprentice had a different cause for swelling. Thus, without understanding the intentions and reason's behind the master's actions, simply by following blindly, the apprentice did great harm.

Similarly, we need to understand the reasons and intentions behind Srila Prabhupada's condemnation of gay marriage. There are two possible causes of how he viewed gay marriage- one reflective of the understanding of homosexuality current in the middle of the twentieth century in which he lived, and the one current today. It is unreasonable that he had the latter knowledge- that knowledge was not yet known. Only very recently has the science of genetics proven biologically speaking, exactly what attempts to “cure” homosexuality also proved, by failure of the same- that sexuality is genetically determined.

The following actions of Srila Prabhupada are further proof that his understanding of homosexuality was that it is acquired, not inherent:

1. His marriage of gay devotees to the opposite sex- indicating he believed sexuality could be changed..
2. His use of the words “it should not be considered” in his purport to SB 3.20.26, indicating he believed that there is choice involved.
- 3 His placing of the term “homosexual appetite” in a verse that is about heterosexual males, indicating he believed it was acquired..
4. His repeated linking of homosexuality with insatiable lust, indicating that he believed this was the cause.

Certainly if he considered excessive lust to be the cause of homosexuality, then he would recommend straight marriage, as he did for all devotees who had a problem with lust. His purpose was to allow a situation where the devotee can progress gradually without the frustration of artificial sense restraint, and by keeping committed to the marriage vows, out of a sense of love and loyalty to one's partner, then naturally the senses are brought under control.

Knowing what we now know about the nature of sexuality, that it is not acquired, but inherent and unchangeable, we stay true to Srila Prabhupada when we support gay marriage for our gay devotees, because all of the fore-mentioned reasons for straight marriage are there for gay marriage. As explained in chapter four, this includes making Krsna conscious families as well.

In serving the spiritual master, it is important to serve his purpose. If heterosexual marriage of gay people has the opposite effect intended- frustration ending in failure, if it fails due to not taking into account the cause of homosexuality, then we would be just like the foolish apprentice to continue this failed policy.

Here we find a different cause- bodily type, just as the veterinarian found a different cause for the swollen throat. Since the causes are different, so must the effect be understood, and action accordingly adjusted- for the benefit of all. That is following that is not blind.

Seventh Sanity Sun-Shower

All-Attractive Krsna

It is logical that we may overcome our differences by focusing on our similarities, and essentially and existentially there is nothing different at all between us. There is nothing essentially or existentially different even between cruel demons and soft-hearted devotees, what to speak of devotees and devotees, but on the madhyama level we have to make distinctions between who is envious and who is innocent, who is a friendly peer and who is more advanced, and shape our relationships accordingly.

An intermediate or second-class devotee, called madhyama adhikari, offers his love to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is a sincere friend to all the devotees of the Lord, shows mercy to ignorant people who are innocent and disregards those who are envious of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

(SB 11.2.46)

In this verse, there is no mention whatsoever of distinction between gay and straight, or other distinctions like caste and body type. From this we can conclude that such discrimination is not a permissible distinction for the madhyama bhakta.

It is further condemned in the 3rd Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam.

“As the blazing fire of death, I cause great fear to whoever makes the least discrimination between living entities, because of a differential outlook. Therefore through charitable gifts and attention, as well as through friendly behavior and viewing all to be alike, one should propitiate Me, who abide in all creatures as their very Self” (SB 3.29. 26-27)

It may be argued that Srila Prabhupada made distinctions between gay and straight, but

1. Only in regard to the activity, not the individual, and in particular not any individual attracted to Krsna. Once attraction to Krsna was kindled in that soul, he was practically blind to their sexuality. This is a natural consequence of his unshakeable faith that bhakti can drive away all obstacles.
2. In regard to condemnation of the activity, this is the specific prerogative of the spiritual master. If he sees a situation in which the disciple may become entangled by lust, he will warn him of the degradations. As explained before, he was not- and could not be aware- that attraction to the same sex is not shaped by behavior, but genetics. It is predetermined, at least for the most part.

With these two considerations in mind, we should absolutely discard any discriminatory behavior and attitudes, and follow in the footsteps of Srila Prabhupada, and provide an all-inclusive, loving and non-judgmental atmosphere for all devotees of the Lord. As stated in the introduction, this is not what I've found to be the case online, quite the opposite, which is ironical, because there is another way that we are essentially the same as anyone else in this world. We are all fallen.

We are all fallen who do not have prema, who do not have spontaneous love and attraction for the All-Attractive prema-filled Lord and His sweetly sublime associates and who do not cry in ecstasy while chanting his prema-filled and ecstatic names- and yet we self-righteously judge the fallen condition of others. How pathetic it is for nitya baddhas to focus their tunnel vision of the fallen nature of other nitya baddhas, especially when those thus judged have far better vaisnava qualities than the judges

(which is what I witnessed) and how displeasing this must be to Krsna, especially when done in the name of religion and more so, His personally inaugurated sankirtana movement. When we see a devotee vilified for nothing other than his sexual orientation, then one should be soft-hearted and speak up.

The Other Side of the Pancake

On the other hand, sometimes straight devotees are vilified or misjudged as “homophobic” for not fully supporting such things as “gay pride”. As one devotee put it:

“It seems to me quite rude to insist others go live in a cave just because of not liking to see so much homosexual expression (like seeing pictures of men kissing in the news each week), frequently hearing about "gay pride," etc., and getting called hateful names like homophobe and bigot if not fully in support of the homosexual political agenda.”

It is another mistake to think that people who don't like to see men kissing are necessarily homophobic- as especially devotees who are trying to focus on spiritual identification in their relationship with Krsna, may find that images like that are distracting. Anything that drags the mind away from Krsna's eternal sweetness is not liked by a devotee, at least in the madhyama stage where he is trying to make everything conducive for 24/7 immersion in Krsna consciousness. He avoids that which is unconducive, but if he can't avoid it, then he does not like the situation.

At the same, one should avoid stereotyping and generalizing the situation. One should not equate being gay with sexually explicit behavior- just because some gay people may be that way- as many are very shy and chaste, and as averse as the rest of us to such explicit behavior and images in advertising, which is also present in heterosexuality. The mind has a tendency to stereotype, make generalizations, label people and put them all in one basket. This is terribly unfair when done to sincere devotees and may result in multiple aparadha.

Gay pride, like feminism, is a reaction to mistreatment and misjudgment- but sometimes they get carried away- women hating all men, and gays going overboard with their public displays of affection. Remove the cause- hatred and discrimination- and be accepting, inclusive and with equal vision- then the over-reaction fizzles out.

Genuine Concerns

“My perception is there are people who are deeply homosexual and others who explore homosexual activity despite it not being their real orientation. I have wondered if there some encouraging of the latter going on, which I think would be not be wholesome.”

Online answer from another devotee: “Sexual orientation is something that is fixed during the first two months of pregnancy so there is no question of "encouraging" one sexual orientation over another, any more than left or right handedness can be "encouraged." However, if a person is bisexual there will have to be some exploration on their part to see which gender works best for them in terms of establishing a long-term partnership.”

Online answer from me: Thanks for the respectful non-judgmental discussion you two are having, which seeks to understand and enter into the mindset of the other, without prejudice and jumping to conclusions. I think you are right, and there should be some concern that people are being encouraged in a wrong direction, as lust is the eternal enemy of the soul. The exploration is probably due to bisexuality issues however, as has been pointed out.

Once having discovered what one is, in terms of bodily sexual identification, the value of marriage comes in- because it provides a stable loving environment where one's body and emotional needs are filled in a simple, non-extravagant way. Limiting oneself to one partner is a vow of austerity and sense control, actually, but because there is affection involved, the soul embraces it willingly.

Then the senses become more peaceful- knowing that exploration with others is not an option, as it would hurt one's partner. So it is very important that gay people should be encouraged to marry. Excluding them from all ashramas is dangerous for them spiritually and not so many can become lifelong celibates.

Of course, many are in marriage-like commitments already, as they perceive the need for peace and emotional stability. Recognizing that this is valuable for the soul, we should honor it by allowing it to be formalized and socially approved.

If the couple are spiritual seekers and like-minded in that area, which is also so important and should be the basis of partnership, then the commitment to each other helps them advance spiritually. For the sold-out materialist, marriage functions as a barrier to the problem of promiscuity and loveless sex, which is hurtful and degrading.

Some misconceptions encountered online.

“Heterosexual relations are natural, whereas homosexual ones are not. “

Heterosexual relations are not natural, but a symptom of diseased conditioning. To be attracted to Krsna. is the natural condition of the soul. The belief that one can enjoy matter, in the forms of other's bodies, is an illusion, for the body is temporary and in that sense, illusory, and this is true whether one is heterosexual or homosexual and true whether one uses the production of children as a justification. Only soul-to-soul union can bring us the bliss we crave.

Another symptom of a diseased conditioning is to find faults in sincere devotees, who have and/or are cultivating the qualities of pure devotion, with one's self-righteous hypocritical stance, completely oblivious to the effects on their hearts and their sraddha, and not caring, because one has shut off one's capacity to love.

Srila Prabhupada discouraged gay sex- and straight sex unless it was for procreation, but the fact remains that few of our straight couples follow strictly that principle, yet hypocrites that they are, find no qualms in pointing the finger at other struggling souls. We are all fallen who do not have prema. Talks of condemnation of others sex life, instead of discussions concerning the sweet name, form and lila of Krsna, show more about the mentality of those thus obsessed, than those they condemn.

Compared to animals, the human being is very close to his relationship with Krsna. and therefore his relationships are more than just a need to procreate, or an expression of lust. The real need of the soul is perfect unconditional love, which can only come from Krsna, but due to the effects of the illusory potency, it is sought in intimacy. In marriage there is the possibility of unconditional love, as there is commitment and ongoing care- it's a promise.

Until each and every soul is experiencing rasa with Krsna, they will need marriage, as everyone needs unconditional love from some source, to thrive. We are in an alien environment, far from our real home, exactly like a person trying to live underwater. Until he reaches the land, or at least the surface

of the water, he needs to have oxygen bottles to breathe out of. It's a poor replacement for the fresh and unlimited air of the atmosphere, but it helps us survive the suffocating atmosphere of impersonal materialism we are forced to endure.

Bonds Between ALL Beings

Since we are created for the eternal loving atmosphere of Krsnaloka, we crave for all aspects of it, especially that unconditional love and acceptance flowing from the most melted-hearted personalities imaginable, and try to find that kind of love everywhere we look. Searching through the four rasas in which it is reposed in our homeland, if we don't find it in our relationships with friends, employees or parental figures, we will necessarily seek it in intimacy. More loving and accepting relationships, not only reduces the need for intimacy but also softens the heart, makes one less inclined to aparadha, and also helps one enter the mood of the sweet loving exchanges in Vraja.

One online exchange devotee described this love as follows:

Attention free from criticism, proprietorship, domination, divination, ... and even correction (trying to make you better).

This is an excellent analysis of the human condition, but while this should be given attention to, focus should not be lost from Krsna's unconditional love, which is perfect and ever-increasing and not taken from us at the point of death. The deepest need of the soul is to be reminded of his eternal relationship with his eternal friend. That relationship is so satisfying, that the need for unconditional love is swept away by an ocean of it. Without this as the focus of all our loving energies- if we relegate it to the background- then we are in a precarious position, dependent on a situation where other jiva souls will give us unconditional love- or reciprocate ours- not guaranteed at all!

So while developing unconditional love for other jivas is part of the process, we should keep it in that context. Bhakti is the real need of the soul, which satisfies the other needs, drenches the soul in happiness, and can never be taken away.

Eighth Sanity Sunshower

Avoiding Vaishnava Aparadha

Until we have developed unconditional love for Krsna and all His parts and parcels, with special undivided affection and respect in regard to His devotees, there is always the possibility of vaisnava aparadha. A lamentable amount of it can be seen online, as pointed out before, and it is much more than can be imagined could happen in person- because it is so easy. Even if you faceless offenders use alternative names to your real one to protect your identity, your actions are witnessed within your very heart of hearts, and you are not immune from the reaction.

Sometimes we unintentionally offend, though, due to a prejudiced attitude, but if this hurts another devotee, we can be sure that it will, in due course, hurt us much more. The results cannot be compared with anything else we do- even the most abominable sin can be swept away by devotion, but not aparadha. Nama aparadha, especially vaisnava aparadha, is so offensive to the Supersoul who is so kind and protective of His devotees, that it leaves a stain on our inner character which cannot be obliterated for many lifetimes, prevents or stunts our progress, and causes ongoing suffering. This is the very reason, often the only reason, why hari-nama does not bear the fruit described in the sastra- for almost all of us have been offenders at some point of our limitless time here in the material world. Thus, the effects of aparadha last for many lifetimes and so for an incalculably long time, we sell ourselves short of the destruction of all material pangs and desires, the bestowal of bliss surpassing brahmananda, and the destruction of samsara, promised by the Holy Name.

We cannot undo the countless offenses we have committed in prior lives, but we can stop now, and vow to never make another one again, and if we have knowingly offended someone, and we know whom, we should beg forgiveness. That is pretty hard online- you don't know who has read your nasty post!

We cannot justify ourselves that it is not a real vaisnava whom we have offended, as the defects in the vaisnava are no excuse.

The sastric pramana for these statements, from Hari Nama Cintamani, is as follows:

When a person attracted to the Holy Name once says the Holy Name, his previous sins are destroyed.

The scent of his previous sins may linger for a few days, but by the power of the Holy Name, they too are destroyed.

During those days when the scent of sin is not destroyed, to ordinary eyes, he may still seem to be a sinner.

Seeing the scent of that sin, someone may criticize that devotee. Seeing that he has sinned previously, someone may criticize his character.

That critic is an offender. Because he has blasphemed a devotee, he commits an offense to the Holy Name. Because Krsna is angry with him, he falls down. (HNC 37-42)

A person who criticizes a vaisnava's birth, previous faults, the almost completely destroyed remnants of his previous faults or his momentary lapses is a fool who is punished by Yamaraja.

Lord Krsna will not forgive offenses to a true vaisnava in whose mouth the glories of the name stay.

Anyone who, turning away from dharma, yoga, yajna and the jnana kanda part of the Vedas, instead worships Lord Krsna's holy name, is the best of persons. (HNC 58-61)

From Madhurya Kadambini, by Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura:

In the same way, the offending devotee will at first suffer some miseries. As he performs sincere service to the devotees, the scriptures, and spiritual master, the Name will again gradually manifest mercy and gradually eliminate his anarthas. Thus, one cannot argue against the gradual elimination of anarthas.

Someone may argue that, I have never committed any offenses. One should not make such statements. Though the offense may not have been done recently, it may have been done in the past, but one can infer the existence of offenses by their effect. The effect of offenses is that a person will not manifest any symptoms of prema by performance of nama kirtana. MK, 3.20

By the divine power of nama kirtana, certainly in time that person will be delivered from his offense. However, he should not justify himself by arguing that sastra says, “The Holy Name alone is sufficient to deliver an offender”. So what is the need of humbling himself by offering repeated respects and service to the Vaisnava that he has offended? This type of mentality makes him guilty of further offense.

Nor should one be of the mentality to think that the offense of sadhu ninda discriminates between types of Vaisnavas. It does not refer only to one who is fully and perfectly qualified with all the qualities mentioned in scripture, such as mercifulness, never harming others, and forgiving to all living entities. A person cannot minimize his offense by pointing out some defect in the devotee.

In answer the scriptures say: sarvacara vivarjitau sathadhiyo bratya jagadvancakau: Even a person who is of very bad character, a cheater, devoid of proper behavior, malicious, devoid of samskaras, and full of worldly desires, if he surrenders to the Lord, must be considered a sadhu. What to speak of a pure Vaisnava. (MK, 3.5)

Rupa Goswami, Bhakti-Rasamrita- Sindhu:

Moreover, it should be stated: By an offense against the dearest devotee of the Lord, even real bhava will be destroyed, if the offense is grave. If the offense is medium, the bhava will turn to bhavabhasa. If the offense is slight, the bhava will become an inferior type. BRS, 1.3.54

Jiva Gosvami's Commentary:

By two types of grave offenses – offense to the dearest devotee or to Krsna Himself – even real bhava is destroyed. By medium offense, bhava becomes bhavabhasa – a shadow of bhava. By slight offense, the bhava degrades in category. Becoming an inferior type means that there will be degradation in terms of the five rasas and the eight stages from mahabhava down to rati. Thus, change in bhava will take place according to the seriousness of the offense.

From Visvanatha Cakravarti's Commentary:

If the aparadha is slight, the bhava changes type. Madhura-rati becomes dasya-rati. Dasyarati becomes santa-rati.

Thus, the effects of aparadha apply even to vaisnavas that have fault in their character. It does not only apply to pure vaisnavas. Having once uttered the Holy Name makes a person a vaisnava to whom vaisnava aparadha will apply. Its effects are long-lasting, over many lifetimes, and they destroy the effects of the Holy Name. Sins do not destroy the effects of the Holy Name, which destroys sin itself.

Therefore, as we are careful to avoid sin, so much more so should we be careful to avoid nama aparadha which includes vaisnava aparadha or offense to ANY devotee who has once chanted the Holy Name of Krsna.

Such offenses can be avoided in two ways- negative suggestion and positive cultivation. If we always think about avoiding offense, we will necessarily slip up, because being conditioned souls, we are prone to make mistakes. Thus, I have seen so many times, extremely offensive devotees realize their mistake and give a token apology- not heartfelt, because the effects of aparadha are often immediate- and often over-inflated, wordy and ingenuine.

On the other hand, if we cultivate friendship and the mood of being a well-wisher, and not seeing in terms of bodily distinctions, but every soul as being part and parcel of our sweet and lovable Lord Gopala, then offense is a hard thing to commit. We would have to consciously try to commit it- because it is against the vaisnava character we have been cultivating. Not that we should assume, either, we have been committing none. It's just that, naturally, it is more unlikely.

Cultivating a mood of friendship and solidarity with ALL Krsna's devotees, regardless of their body type, helps raise us to the transcendental platform of non-duality, which is not devoid of feelings, not aloof and detached, but full of loving exchanges. Such unconditional love, devoid of judgment and full of confidentiality, understanding and trust, shown to devotees struggling, like ourselves, to control the senses, actually makes their sense control easier, as they are then less lonely and thus less likely to seek human connections in the intimacy of illicit sex, and more happy with their life, and achieving a higher taste from their relationships. It serves to do the same thing to us too.

One may argue, "I have not committed aparadha. I just copied and pasted Srila Prabhupada saying that homosex is demoniac. It was for their benefit – they should know this. How could quoting Prabhupada be offensive?"

If even chanting can be offensive, then certainly quoting Prabhupada can be (which both being a type of kirtanam is arguably the same thing). If we use Prabhupada not in the way he intended but something else, then that is a misuse of his words, something that would anger him. If on top of that, it hurts and offends Krsna's devotees, it is offensive. Srila Prabhupada never used the word "demon" on any of his disciples, and if he ever criticized their sex life, he was very careful to separate the act from the devotee. In addition, his personal mood was loving and accepting of anyone.

Whether what we say offends or instructs often hinges on this. If we have consistently been a friend and well-wisher to a person, our concerned private criticism will never be taken as an offense. The very same words thrown at a stranger from the impersonal faceless domain of cyber space, completely and openly before the uncensored public eye of an unknown number of strangers, can be humiliating and

crushing to the extreme.

In addition, on the topic of homosexuality, as discussed before, since it is not something that can be changed with good instruction, a fact not known during Prabhupada's time, then it is a criticism which cannot be benefited from.

The only way to rise out of homosexual behavior is the same as for heterosexual addictions as well-developing our natural attraction for this guy!

...Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept in playing on His flute, with blooming eyes like lotus petals, with head decked with peacock's feather, with the figure of beauty tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and His unique loveliness charming millions of Cupids...
...round whose neck is swinging a garland of flowers beautified with the moon-locket, and whose two hands are adorned with the flute and jeweled ornaments, who always revels in pastimes of love, whose graceful threefold-bending form of Syamasundara is eternally manifest...

I pray at the lotus feet of my merciful spiritual masters that this treatise will please them and that they will grant their blessings, their seva and their siksa to this fallen soul.

I pray at the feet of the soft-hearted and merciful devotees that they will forgive my past and present offenses, committed knowingly and unknowingly and kindly give me their friendship.

I hope and pray to the infallible Lord Acyuta that this little book will stop the multiple offenses at their feet and turn everyone's hearts into butter so that Lord Makhancora can steal it, and distribute it to His eternal associates (may you all enter the path of spontaneous devotion, ragatmika-anuga)...

Radhe Radhe! Please grant the reader of this book Your sweet mercy! Help us all chant without offenses, this mantra:

Hare: Steal my mind and deliver from the bondage of material life

Krsna: Attract my mind to you, Krsna

Hare: Steal my heart with your sweetness

Krsna: Purify my mind by giving me knowledge of how to worship you through your devotees.

Krsna: May I develop taste for You

Krsna: Make me steady in hearing about your name, form, qualities and pastimes.

Hare(Radhe): Make me suitable for serving you.

Hare (Radhe): Please instruct me on my service.

Hare (Radhe): Let me hear the most cherished pastimes with your consort, Krsna.

Rama: Let me hear the most cherished pastimes with your consort, Radha.

Hare (Radhe): Let me see your pastimes with your beloved.

Rama: Let me see your pastimes with Radha.

Rama: Engage me in remembering your name, form, qualities and pastimes.

Rama: Make me qualified for service in your pastimes.

Hare: Make me your servant, please enjoy.

Hare: Enjoy with me.

By determined practice, the practitioner's mind will become purified, and thus the mind will be spontaneously attracted to serving in the footsteps of the eternal associates.

APPENDIX

The Divine and Demoniac Natures

This will make it clear who can justly be categorized as a demon...

O son of Prtha, in this world there are two kinds of created beings. One is called the divine and the other demoniac. I have already explained to you at length the divine qualities. Now hear from Me of the demoniac.

They say that this world is unreal, that there is no foundation and that there is no God in control. It is produced of sex desire, and has no cause other than lust.

Following such conclusions, the demoniac, who are lost to themselves and who have no intelligence, engage in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world.

The demoniac, taking shelter of insatiable lust, pride and false prestige, and being thus illusioned, are always sworn to unclean work, attracted by the impermanent.

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They believe that to gratify the senses unto the end of life is the prime necessity of human civilization. Thus there is no end to their anxiety. Being bound by hundreds and thousands of desires, by lust and anger, they secure money by illegal means for sense gratification.

Thus perplexed by various anxieties and bound by a network of illusions, one becomes too strongly attached to sense enjoyment and falls down into hell.

Self-complacent and always impudent, deluded by wealth and false prestige, they sometimes perform sacrifices in name only without following any rules or regulations.

Bewildered by false ego, strength, pride, lust and anger, the demon becomes envious of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is situated in his own body and in the bodies of others, and blasphemes against the real religion.

