

Living with Vows

An inside story

by Kadamba Kanana Swami

Presentation of the Topic

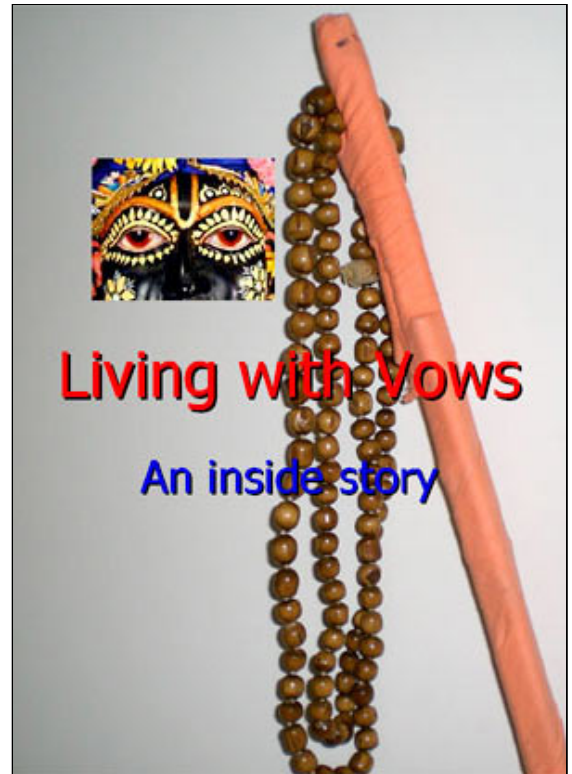
- 1. [Introduction](#)
- 2. [Harer nama eva kevalam](#)
- 3. [Four principles](#)
- 4. [Higher levels](#)
- 5. [Categories of Vows](#)

[Additional reference material](#)

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Living with Vows - Introduction

This is our story, it is our own description of the life that we actually live. Not the story of one man, but a collective story of some impressions. It is written for anyone and everyone who desires to read it as a matter of interest, but also especially to offer support and insight to those who are actual practitioners of life with spiritual vows. Even when first introduced to ISKCON one becomes very soon aware of the four regulative principles;

- No meat, fish or eggs
- No gambling
- No intoxication
- No illicit sex

and of the prescribed number of daily chanting *sixteen rounds* of japa of the Hare Krishna maha-mantra. Chanting the holy name and following the four regulative principle become accepted as the ideal standard of life, so even people who do not actually abide by them, can also be counted as those living with vows. What to speak of people who have made a formal commitment by taking vows of initiation and have promised before the Lord, that they will adhere to these standards for the rest of their lives. Naturally with such a high norm there are bound to be failures and along with it a sense of guilt, which can be favorable if it is an impetus to recommit one self with renewed enthusiasm, but which can be unfavorable if one drowns himself in an ocean of guilt and defeat, without making any improvement. Some in that state even give up practicing Krishna consciousness to escape the psychological pressure of living as a failure. The vows should not be seen in that light, but rather as point of security in the midst of the wild waves on the ocean of material existence.

Failure must not be seen as a permanent defeat, rather in spite of it one must persevere. As Prabhupada expressed it; "Failure is the pillar of success!" One interesting point to note is that Srila Prabhupada stresses these four regulative principles as a program for mainstream society and not only for a very exclusive minority group who are drawn to live as a priestly class. Reflecting for a moment how this would be feasible from a sociological point of view especially the principle of no illicit sex, his teachings may appear unrealistic and inconsiderate of human nature, something not feasible for most people. However from a transcendental perspective, i.e. looking at every living being like a soul who is temporarily entrapped in a particular material body, we can see how the four regulative principles are the entrance unto the spiritual transcendental path, or the beginning of a consciousness based on *aham brahmasmi*, that we are spirit and not this body. This is the price to pay to go back to Godhead.

Although Vedic culture also offers a society based on the principles of varnasrama, where society may be divided in to four classes according to the consciousness that four prototypes of people have developed, namely; *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas*, *vaisyas* and *sudras*. Especially the brahmanas are in the mode of goodness and principled in their behavior, whereas the other classes each are respectively more affected by the modes of passion and ignorance. Still although this varnasrama system maybe considered the best social system to accommodate and regulate human nature, it is not sufficient to liberate one form the cycle of birth and death. Therefore the four regulative principles are offered to all classes of men as a feasible path, even to fifth class men, *mlecchas* and *yavanas*, those without principles and meat-eaters, which becomes feasible by the chanting of the holy name. Therefore the chanting of the Holy Name is the principal means that makes it possible for people, who are otherwise unable to follow such standards, to rise above their limitations.

Harer nama eva kevalam

The chanting of the Hare Krishna Mahamantra is the only means to attain perfection in this age of kali.

A fixed number of Rounds

- At first some of the boys thought that they would also have to chant sixty-four rounds, and they became perplexed: that would take all day! How could you go to a job if you had to chant sixty-four rounds? How could anyone chant sixty-four rounds? Then someone said Swamiji had told him that thirty-two rounds a day would be a sufficient minimum for the West. Wally said he had heard Swamiji say twenty-five-but even that seemed impossible. Then Prabhupada offered the rock-bottom minimum: sixteen rounds a day, without fail. Whoever got initiated would have to promise. (*SP Lilamrta*)
- While chanting we think when are these rounds going to be finished; the reality is, never, it will go on for ever.



Sri Caitanya introduced the congregational chanting of the Holy Name on a large scale as the process to attain spiritual perfection in this age.

In the Caitanya Bhagavata the following story is mentioned,

The brahmanas were inviting Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu for lunch, but the Lord refused and said I will only take my meals in the house of a "lakhpati". This title is generally reserved to indicate a wealthy man who has at least a hundred thousand rupees. The brahmanas had no access to that kind of money so they felt very disappointed. Then Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu continued and gave His definition of a "lakhpati". He said; "I consider anyone who chants a hundred thousand names daily to be a "lakhpati". From that day on all the brahmanas began to chant a hundred thousand names, the equivalent of sixty four rounds, a day and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was pleased with them and accepted prasadam in their homes.



In the Siksastakam, the eight prayers, which are the only written words left by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the Lord does not merely speak of one lakh of names a day as the desired quantity of chanting, but rather He speaks of *kirtaniyah sada harih*, to always chant the Holy Name of the Lord continuously. That is the real goal to strive for.

As the Founder Acharya of ISKCON Srila Prabhupada made some adjustments for the western audience. For one thing he fixed the daily number of rounds on sixteen as the minimum requirement to keep all one's option open to go back to Godhead. Srila Prabhupada was in an extraordinary position, since he was bringing the teachings of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu from East to West. On the one hand Srila Prabhupada's message was based on authorized, traditional vedic scriptures such as Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam, Additionally Srila Prabhupada represented a tradition of Acaryas, spiritual masters who came in disciplic succession over thousands of years. If we present traditional standards of scriptures and the acaryas as the shore and the mercy of Mahaprabhu as the ocean. Then we can visualize how the water of the ocean is washing on to the beach and how each wave leaves a different line on the sand as it reaches it's farthest point on the shore. Srila Prabhupada as the Founder Acharya determined where the demarcation line between vedic tradition and the mercy of Mahaprabhu was to be drawn. When he extended the reach of the waves of mercy even further than what Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu originally had done, then he was empowered to do so, on the strength of his extraordinary bhakti and due to his special mission. As Srila Prabhupada explained himself;

Therefore this Hiranyakasipu thought himself to be very intelligent and wanted to cheat Krsna and His servant, but he was cheated actually.

Therefore he said that tad-bhrtya-rsi-vakyam rtam vidhatum. Rsi-vakya. Even the devotee or the servant of Krsna says something, even it is wrong, Krsna upholds this. Kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati [Bg. 9.31]. So even it is wrongly done, still, Krsna fulfills because He thinks that "My servant has promised; it must be fulfilled." Therefore Pahlada Maharaja, in the previous verse he has said, tava bhrtya-parstva. So to serve the servant of Krsna is better than to serve directly Krsna, because if the servant of Krsna promises something, if the servant of Krsna says, "I'll take you to Krsnaloka," you must go there. (*Srila Prabhupada Lecture SB 7.9.29, Mayapur, March 7,'76*)

What is the position of a devotee who consistently fails to chant the prescribed sixteen rounds? This question was asked to Srila Prabhupada on a morning walk and he replied, "He is an animal."

When the quality comes there is no force. You will have a taste for chanting. You will desire at that time, "Why sixteen round? Why not sixteen thousand rounds?" That is quality. That is quality. It is by force. You'll not do it; therefore at least sixteen rounds. But when you come to the quality, you will feel yourself, "Why sixteen? Why not sixteen thousand?" That is quality, automatically. Just like Haridasa Thakura was doing. He was not forced to do. Even Caitanya Mahaprabhu, He requested, "Now you are old enough. You can reduce." So he refused, "No. Up to the end of my life I shall go on." That is quality. (*Srila Prabhupada Morning Walk, November 2, 1975, Nairobi*)

So we are simply blessed by Srila Prabhupada, that by chanting a minimum of sixteen rounds daily and following four regulative principles we become eligible candidates to purify ourselves to the process of bhakti yoga and to ultimately go back to Godhead at the end of this life."

Four principles

The origin of the four regulative principles in Srimad Bhagavatam

*suta uvaca
abhyarthitas tada tasmai
sthanani kalaye dadau
dyutam panam striyah suna
yatradharmas catur-vidhah*

Suta Gosvami said: Maharaja Pariksit, thus being petitioned by the personality of Kali, gave him permission to reside in places where gambling, drinking, prostitution and animal slaughter were performed. (SB 1.17.38)

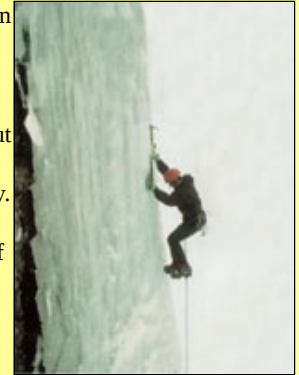


It is important to note that the four regulative principles which Srila Prabhupada introduced are not his own personal idea but are based on Srimad Bhagavatam , through them the influence of the age of Kali can be destroyed.

Higher levels

Vows make us act on levels higher than what comes natural to us.

For most of us we could say that the vows we take, make us act on a level which is more exalted than we would naturally follow on our own accord. Once the vows are there we are facing the challenge to rise up to the level of the vows. As we struggle we become aware that we have to fill in the gap left by the restrictions with inspiration, higher taste, supportive discipline and favorable people and situations. We become humbled, we realize we are not great saints or powerful transcendentalists, but simply depending on mercy to make us carry on. Mercy from Krishna, from His devotees, from the Holy Name, from prasadam, the Holy Dhama and other things that are full of transcendental potency. Eventually we need to become more authentic in being situated on that higher level, that will only happen by always humbly taking shelter of Krishna, without Him we are willing toys in the hands of Maya.



Prahlada Maharaja had fully taken shelter of the Lord, even in the most extreme situations where his life was endangered. Later he prayed to lord Nrsimhadeva as follows;

O best of the great personalities, I am not at all afraid of material existence, for wherever I stay I am fully absorbed in thoughts of Your glories and activities. My concern is only for the fools and rascals who are making elaborate plans for material happiness and maintaining their families, societies and countries. I am simply concerned with love for them.
SB 7.9.43

Categories of Vows in the Gaudiya Vaisnava Culture

Two Major Divisions:

- **Primary Vows:** Initiations
- **Secondary Vows:** Marriage

Additional Sub-Divisions:

- **Unspoken Vows:** Absolute obedience to Guru, Chastity for Woman, Celibacy in two asramas
- **Additional Vows:** Haridasa Thakura & Srila Bhaktisiddhanta chanted one billion Names
- **Supportive Vows:** Madhava Tithi, Ekadasi, Kartika vratas

We have first made a distinction between *Primary* and *Secondary Vows*.

What I call **Primary Vows** are those relating directly to the ultimate goal of life, to attain love of God or to return back to the spiritual world. They include;

- **Hari Nama** - initiation in the maha mantra, which includes chanting a fixed number of rounds, to give up sinful activity and surrender to guru.
- **Upanaya** - brahminical initiation according to Pancarata principles, One receives the sacred thread and qualifies to act as a priest. One must be a living example of the scriptures and develop the characteristics of the mode of goodness; peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, wisdom, knowledge, and religiousness
- **Sannyasa** - the renounced order of life. The sannyasi dedicates mind, body and words to the service of Krishna. He is strictly celibate for life and generally travels throughout the world dedicating his life exclusively to spreading the mission of Krishna consciousness.



Secondary Vows are vows that create a favorable situation for spiritual practices such as for example marriage according to spiritual principles, where sex life is only permitted in the marital relationship and then exclusively for procreation. Although such vows are sacred and based on the instructions of the Supreme Lord such as are found in the Bhagavad Gita, still they are here considered to be secondary, because by merely following these vows alone one can not attain the transcendental platform and not attain love of God nor return to the spiritual world.

In the current discussion on "Living with Vows" our central theme remains the ultimate goal of life and therefore our focus are the primary vows of initiation and the additional vows that enhance the practice of them.

Reference Material (Living with Vows)

- [Frame of Reference for reviewing our life with vows](#)
- [Dictionary definitions](#)
- [8 types of illicit sex](#)
- [Aldous Huxley](#)
- [All devotees' right to a real and direct relationship with Prabhupada](#)
- [At Abhay.](#)
- [Avadhuta-vesah](#)
- [The blessing way.](#)
- [Brahmacari life](#)
- [Brahmacarya](#)
- [Building an all-attractive ISKCON](#)
- [Caturmasya vow](#)
- [Celibacy does not necessitate that one be absolutely free from sex life](#)
- [Chastity, vow of](#)
- [Citti accepted a great vow to beget a son](#)
- [Crossing the law](#)
- [Daksa, though a fallen braham](#)
- [an still performed sacrifice](#)
- [Deviant Vaisnava Sects](#)
- [The Different Drum](#)
- [Drop Out twice](#)
- [Falldown from Spiritual Life](#)
- [Fasting](#)
- [Fixed in their vows due to their devotional service](#)
- [Fixed in unbroken devotional service](#)
- [Four Kumaras](#)
- [Fruitive sacrifice](#)
- [He accepted the vows of a sage](#)
- [He may take the vow to remain celibate up to twenty-five years of age](#)
- [He took a vow that the next day Krsna would have to take up weapons](#)
- [History of Celibacy.](#)
- [Image gallery](#)
- [In a hostile environment](#)
- [Initiation Into Spiritual Life](#)
- [An improper vow to satisfy Lord Siva](#)
- [Kardama Muni's traditional standards of sannyasa](#)
- [Kartikeya as a son](#)
- [Krsna broke His vow](#)
- [Krsna's wives must have undergone vows](#)
- [Material desire](#)
- [Max Weber - Prophet](#)
- [Meet Dr. Bill Coulson](#)
- [Naisthika-brahmacari](#)
- [Niyaman-sacred vows; vahanti-observe](#)
- [Nondeceptive penance in bhakti-yoga](#)
- [Not taken a vow of perpetual celibacy.](#)
- [Nuns gave up vows](#)
- [One may slip down to the lower forms of life](#)
- [Others, who do not strictly follow celibacy vows](#)
- [Pandora](#)
- [A powerful mystic brahmana](#)
- [Prabhupada Meditation](#)
- [Profession of Vows](#)
- [A prospective candidate](#)
- [Religion and Religions](#)

- [Renaissance](#)
- [The Responsibility of Human Life](#)
- [Sacrifice for fruitive results](#)
- [Sacrifice to reach the moon planet](#)
- [Sacrifices](#)
- [Sanat-kumara's extraordinary qualification](#)
- [Sannyasa](#)
- [Sastra](#)
- [Simple Vows](#)
- [Solemn Vows](#)
- [Standards for Westerners](#)
- [Such a thing as an individual](#)
- [Su-vrata-one who has taken a pious vow](#)
- [Tapomaya-yajna](#)
- [This is the vow of the ladies](#)
- [To tolerate happiness and distress](#)
- [To understand the import of the Vedas](#)
- [Varnasrama: Brahmanas engage in sacrifice](#)
- [Vyasa not satisfied](#)
- [Vyasadeva, firm in Vow](#)
- [Vows created by Lord Brahma](#)
- [Vow of a chaste woman](#)
- [A vow to kill](#)
- [A vow to live in the forest](#)
- [The vow of truthfulness](#)
- [Who had just completed his vows of austerity on the very day](#)
- [Why the pure devotee will ask for anything else?](#)
- [Will Power and Self-Discipline](#)

Frame of Reference

for reviewing our life with vows [more..](#)

Dictionary definitions

Thesaurus - Vow

Swear

Swear, Promise, Give your word, Give your promise, Guarantee, Be determined, Undertake, Declare, Assert

Promise

Promise, Oath, Guarantee, Declaration, Undertaking

Dictionary - vow (vou), n.

1. a solemn promise, pledge, or personal commitment: *marriage vows; a vow of secrecy.*
 2. a solemn promise made to a deity or saint committing oneself to an act, service, or condition.
 3. a solemn or earnest declaration.
 4. take vows, to enter a religious order or house.
- v.t.
5. to make a vow of; promise by a vow, as to God or a saint: *to vow a crusade or a pilgrimage.*
 6. to pledge or resolve solemnly to do, make, give, observe, etc.: *They vowed revenge.*
 7. to declare solemnly or earnestly; assert emphatically (often fol. by a clause as object): *She vowed that she would take the matter to court.*
 8. to dedicate or devote by a vow: *to vow oneself to the service of God.*
- v.i.
9. to make a vow.
 10. to make a solemn or earnest declaration.
- [1250-1300; ME < AF, OF vo(u) < L v\$tum, neut. of v\$stus, ptp. of vov"re to vow]

A vow - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vow>

8 types of illicit sex

So the tapasya life begins from celibacy, brahmacharya. Sukadeva Gosvami recommends. Brahmacharya is described in the sastras that **smaranam kirtanam kelih preksanam guhyam asanam** (?). Sex life, smaranam, thinking of sex life, that is against brahmacharya. Complete celibacy means one should not think of even sex life. Smaranam. Or talk of sex life. Our modern literature, newspaper and everything, simply full with talks of sex life. But this is against brahmacharya life. Smaranam kirtanam keli. And actually indulging in sex life. Preksanam: looking, overlooking a nice boy or nice girl, that is also against brahmacharya. Guhyam asanam: whispering between girls and boys, that is also against brahmachari. **Guhyam asanam sankalpam**. Then determination of sex life. **Vyavasaya**: endeavoring how to effect sex life. So when we can stop all these activities, that is real brahmacharya. It is very difficult at the present age. **Etan maithunyam astangam pravadanti manisinah vikarita brahmacharyam eda astanam laksanam iti** (?). So brahmacharya means that you cannot think of sex life, you cannot talk of sex life, you cannot whisper about sex life, or you cannot endeavor for sex life. These eight types of activities in sex indulgence are against brahmachari life. But here it is prescribed that if you want to make solution of the problems of life, then you adopt, you have to adopt a life of tapasya, austerity, which begins from brahmachari. *Lecture SB 6.1.11 New York July 25 ,1971*

Aldous Huxley

born July 26, 1894, Godalming, Surrey, Eng.
died Nov. 22, 1963, Los Angeles

English novelist and critic gifted with an acute and far-ranging intelligence. His works were notable for their elegance, wit, and pessimistic satire.

Aldous Huxley was a grandson of the prominent biologist T.H. Huxley and was the third child of the biographer and man of letters Leonard Huxley. He was educated at Eton, during which time he became partially blind owing to keratitis. He retained enough eyesight to read with difficulty, and he graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, in 1916. He published his first book in 1916 and worked on the periodical *Athenaeum* from 1919 to 1921. Thereafter he devoted himself largely to his own writing and spent much of his time in Italy until the late 1930s, when he settled in California.

Huxley established himself as a major author in his first two published novels, *Crome Yellow* (1921) and *Antic Hay* (1923); these are witty and malicious satires on the pretensions of the English literary and intellectual coteries of his day. *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) and *Point Counter Point* (1928) are works in a similar vein. Huxley's deep distrust of 20th-century trends in both politics and technology found expression in *Brave New World* (1932), a nightmarish vision of a future society in which psychological conditioning forms the basis for a scientifically determined and immutable caste system. The novel *Eyeless in Giza* (1936) continues to shoot barbs at the emptiness and aimlessness experienced in contemporary society, but it also shows Huxley's growing interest in Hindu philosophy and mysticism as a viable alternative. Many of his subsequent works reflect this preoccupation, notably *The Perennial Philosophy* (1946).

Huxley's most important later works are *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), a brilliantly detailed psychological study of a historical incident in which a group of 17th-century French nuns were allegedly the victims of demonic possession; and *The Doors of Perception* (1954), a book about Huxley's experiences with the hallucinogenic drug mescaline.

All devotees' right to a real and direct relationship with Prabhupada

Yet, the proxy-initiation theorists will have left their mark. If nothing more, even their most vigorous critics can thank them for helping to recognise all devotees' right to a real and direct relationship with Prabhupada. *Heresies of Continuity TKG ICJ5.1 1997*

At Abhay

At Abhay's birth, she had made a vow to eat with her left hand until the day her son would notice and, ask her why she was eating with the wrong hand. [more..](#)

Avadhuta-vesah

avadhuta-vesah-dressed like a mendicant; vratani-vows; cere-performed; hari-tosanani-that pleased the Lord.

TRANSLATION

While so traversing the earth, he simply performed duties to please the Supreme Lord Hari. His occupation was pure and independent. He was constantly sanctified by taking his bath in holy places, although he was in the dress of a mendicant and had no hair dressing nor a bed on which to lie. Thus he was always unseen by his various relatives. *SB 3.1.19*

The blessing way

central ritual of a complex system of ceremonies performed by the Navajo to restore equilibrium to the cosmos.

Of the many rituals classified by the Navajo according to their purpose, the largest group is the Chant Ways, which are concerned with curing and are divided into three groups. The first group are the Holy Way chants-including the Blessing Way, parts of which are found throughout most of the rituals, and the Wind Ways-all of which are used to cure diseases that can be traced to some violation by humans of the supernatural provinces of the Holy People, or supernatural beings. These rituals are further classified into Peaceful Ways, which invoke the beneficence of the Holy People, and Injury Ways, which are primarily exorcistic.

A second subdivision is that of the Ghost Way, or Evil Way, chants-the best known being the Upward-Reaching-Way-that are practiced for exorcism and the curing of illnesses caused by ghosts and witches.

A third subdivision is the Life Ways, which are concerned with healing accidental injuries-the most notable being the Flint Way.

In addition to the Chant Ways, other prominent groups are concerned with success in war (the Enemy Ways) and hunting (the Game Ways), but these groups have mostly become obsolete.

Set apart from all these specifically oriented ways is the Blessing Way, a comparatively short (taking only two days to perform) and simple ritual. Performed for the general well-being of the community, rather than for specific curative purposes, it contains none of the typical features of curing rituals (e.g., sand paintings, prayer sticks, medicine songs, and herbs). To invoke good fortune-such as during childbirth, in blessing a new hogan (home), and in a girl's puberty ceremony-the traditional Navajo family would have the Blessing Way sung at least twice a year. Parts of the Blessing Way are incorporated into almost all other Chant Ways.

The story of the Blessing Way contains various details of the mythical events that occurred after the legendary emergence of the Navajo from the earth at creation. These events provide the prototypes for the organization of the cosmos, important Navajo ceremonials, and their central cultural institutions.

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Brahmacari life

In order to award the highest benefit of human life, the varnasrama system trains the follower to adopt the vow of celibacy beginning from the order of brahmachari. The brahmachari life is for students who are educated to follow strictly the vow of celibacy. Youngsters who have had no taste of sex life can easily follow the vow of celibacy, and once fixed in the principle of such a life, one can very easily continue to the highest perfectional stage, attaining the kingdom of the three-fourths energy of the Lord. *SB 2.6.20*

Brahmacharya

"The vow of brahmacharya is meant to help one completely abstain from sex indulgence in work, words and mind-at all times, under all circumstances, and in all places." No one can perform correct yoga practice through sex indulgence. *Bg.6.13-14pp*

Building an all-attractive ISKCON

To a large degree I feel it is because when we lost Srila Prabhupada's personal presence, we lost not only our powerful leader, our founder-acarya, but a mother with a heart. Sometimes devotees affectionately refer to Srila Prabhupada as having the heart of a Bengali mother, and indeed, Srila Prabhupada cared for us like an affectionate mother. Our mother has an amazing capacity to love us, accept us as we are, respect and appreciate us. She may see our faults, but she has faith that we will overcome them and our higher traits will prevail. Sometimes her reassuring faith alone helps us conquer our lower nature. She gives us a sense of self-worth and makes us feel that we have a contribution to make in the world. When there's fighting among the brothers and sisters, she knows how to pacify each one and maintain a co-operative spirit for the welfare of the entire family. If she's a good mother, she'll not only take care of us materially, but give spiritual direction as well. Prabhupada had more than a normal mother's capacity for patience and love and we came to know him as our most intimate well-wisher. He brought a nurturing, caring, spiritual relationship which we so much needed. Thus, he gathered his followers around him in love and made the ISKCON family.

We've all seen that devotees join ISKCON because of a personal relationship they develop with a devotee. Naturally there was some introduction like receiving a book or seeing devotees on hari-nama, but mostly devotees have joined due to a personal relationship. We stay because of relationships we develop, or we leave if they are lacking. *Pranada dd, ICJ1/1 Jan/June 93*

Caturmasya vow

Persons who identify with bodily existence are attached to the fruitive activities described in the Vedic literature. For example, in the Vedas it is said that one who observes the caturmasya vow will attain eternal happiness in the heavenly kingdom. *SB 4.2.22*

Celibacy does not necessitate that one be absolutely free from sex life

A devotee should observe the vow of celibacy. Celibacy does not necessitate that one be absolutely free from sex life; satisfaction with one's wife is permitted also under the vow of celibacy. The best policy is to avoid sex life altogether. That is preferable. Otherwise, a devotee can get married under religious principles and live peacefully with a wife. *SB 3.27.7*

Chastity, vow of

Forbids all voluntary sexual pleasure. It constitutes a matrimonial impediment. If the vow be a simple one, which may be anyone of four kinds (of virginity, of not marrying, of receiving Sacred Orders, or of entering religion), it is a hindering impediment, rendering a marriage unlawful although valid, unless a dispensation be obtained. If the vow be solemn, which means that it is made publicly and for life in a religious community wherein such vows are administered, it constitutes a diriment impediment. In certain other communities which have received a special permission from the Holy See to that effect, simple vows would cause a diriment impediment. In either case a dispensation may be given by the Church. The reception of Sacred Orders (that is, of the first of the major orders, which, in our Latin Rite, is subdeaconship) imposes a solemn vow of chastity; and while the Church has the power of dispensing from this, this has been very seldom done. *New Catholic Dictionary*

Citti accepted a great vow to beget a son

Citti, wife of the sage Atharva, gave birth to a son named Asvasira by accepting a great vow called Dadhyanca. Now you may hear from me about the descendants of the sage Bhrgu.

PURPORT

The wife of Atharva known as Citti is also known as Santi. She was the eighth daughter of Kardama Muni. *SB 4.1.43*

Crossing the law

*sarva-dharman parityajya, mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo, moksaisyami ma sucham*

(*Bhagavad-gita 18.66*)

"Totally abandoning all kinds of religion, surrender exclusively unto Me. I will liberate you from all kinds of sins, so do not despair." Many rules and rites of varnasram-dharma are given for our benefit, but that is when we are in a lower stage. And in the higher stage, "crossing the law, I shall serve Him"--that is faith!

Heart and Halo ch6 BR Sridhar Swami

Daksa, though a fallen brahman still performed sacrifice

He was born of a great brahmana father, Lord Brahma, but his treatment of Lord Siva was not exactly brahminical; therefore he admitted that he was not a perfect brahmana. Lord Siva and Lord Visnu, however, are affectionate even to an imperfect brahmana. Lord Siva punished Daksa not as one does his enemy; rather, he punished Daksa just to bring him to his senses, so that he would know that he had done wrong. Daksa could understand this, and he acknowledged the great mercy of Lord Krsna and Lord Siva towards the fallen brahmanas, including even himself. Although he was fallen, his vow was to execute the sacrifice, as is the duty of brahmanas, and thus he began his prayers to Lord Siva. *SB 4.7.14*

Deviant Vaisnava Sects

Caste Gosvamis and Smarta-brahmanas, Prakta-sahajiyas, Ativadi, Aula, Baula, Sain, and Daravesa, Kartabhaja and Neda-Nedi [more..](#)

The Different Drum

M. Scott Peck

Community making and peace

"If I think with any integrity at all, I immediately realize that my life is utterly nurtured not only by the earth and the rain and the sun but also by those farmers, publishers, booksellers, as well as by my patients, my children, my wife, and other teachers--indeed by the entire fabric of family, society and creation." pg 239

"it was a gracious respite, because by the end of the war things exploded. The majority of veterans enjoyed their welcome home from overseas as heroes and happily settled in to jobs and family life. But there was a minority of young men whose souls had been bruised

by the war, by the violence and evil, who turned inward and toward God. Sometimes by word of mouth, sometimes by seeming grace, they were drawn to this small rural Illinois monastic community as if to an invisible magnet. By the beginning of 1947 the guesthouse was full to overflowing with them. Most eventually drifted on, but some asked to stay. These were integrated in to the evening community meetings and shortly took vows. An addition was built on to the farmhouse. The chapel was enlarged. By the end of 1949, in the space of a mere three years, the monks of OSA had increased from six to twenty.

But there were also now seeds of chaos in the community. Consensual decision making had become increasingly difficult. Many of the new brothers started to form little alliances and required spiritual direction from the older ones. Several were so scarred by the war that they needed psychiatric treatment outside of the community.

Some who had made their vows within a matter of months decided to leave the order. Economically OSA was prospering. More land had been bought and a highly successful community business had been established developing and marketing hybrid grain seeds. But as a community it was in turmoil and close to chaos.

It was those quiet war years as much as anything that enabled the order to survive. By the end of these years the first six monks had not only become deeply wise and spiritually mature individuals but had also evolved in to an extraordinarily cohesive nucleus.

Drop Out twice

Religion and religions

It is a measure of the cultural distance his disciples had to travel that they had to drop out not once but twice: from "straight" society into the counterculture, from counterculture into the organisation proleptically named the International Society for Krsna Consciousness (ISKCON).

But "reversal is the movement of the Tao". In going farther out, Prabhupada's followers found themselves coming back in: they shaved their heads close, rose daily before dawn to chant and pray, abstained from the flesh of animals, gave up the use of licit and illicit drugs, and even in wedlock avoided sex. Having gone farther out than the far-out, they became straighter than the straight.

In time, Prabhupada's students began to grasp that they had joined a formidable religious establishment in its own right, that Prabhupada was grooming them painstakingly to become heirs to an ancient and venerable spiritual tradition, and scrupulous fidelity to its teachings and practices was of central importance to Prabhupada. He himself was simply a conduit; he claimed to act as nothing more than the servant of his guru, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who had in turn been the servant of his guru, Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji, who similarly had served Bhaktivinoda Thakura, and so on. In the introduction to Bhagavad-gita As It Is Prabhupada listed a historical succession of spiritual teachers, going back to Krsna Himself.* This list was Prabhupada's credentials, the source of his teaching authority.

Thus, even though the International Society for Krsna Consciousness emerged as a radical novelty and still finds itself in the situation of a "new religious movement", it is actually a contemporary of a branch of one of the four long-established Vaishnava traditions of India, a branch bearing the formal title of the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya sampradaya.

Ravindra Svarupa Dasa

ICJ 1/1 Religion and Religions Jan/June 93

Falldown from Spiritual Life

Iskcon Community Discussion [more..](#)

Fasting

Starvation can be mitigated by drinking water. It is sometimes found that if a person who has taken a vow to fast takes a little water at intervals, the exhaustion of fasting is at once mitigated. In the Vedas it is also stated, apomayah pranah: "Life depends on water." SB 3.26.43

Fixed in their vows due to their devotional service

Srila Vyasadeva and his representatives are pure in thought due to their spiritual enlightenment, fixed in their vows due to their devotional service, and determined to deliver the fallen souls rotting in material activities. SB1.5.13pp

Fixed in unbroken devotional service

Since then, by the grace of the almighty Visnu, I travel everywhere without restriction both in the transcendental world and in the three divisions of the material world. This is because I am fixed in unbroken devotional service of the Lord. SB 1.6.31

Four Kumaras

Maharaja Prthu offered his welcome to the four Kumaras, addressing them as the best of the brahmanas. He welcomed them, saying: From the beginning of your birth you strictly observed the vows of celibacy, and although you are experienced in the path of liberation, you are keeping yourselves just like small children. *SB 4.22.12*

Fruitive sacrifice

These brahmanas take to education, austerity and vows only for the purpose of maintaining the body. *SB 4.2.26*

He accepted the vows of a sage

Thus the King, the worthy descendant of the Pandavas, decided once and for all and sat on the Ganges' bank to fast until death and give himself up to the lotus feet of Lord Krsna, who alone is able to award liberation. So, freeing himself from all kinds of associations and attachments, he accepted the vows of a sage. *SB 1.19.7*

He may take the vow to remain celibate up to twenty-five years of age

The principle of brahmacarya is celibacy. There are two kinds of brahmacaris. One is called naisthika-brahmacari, which means one who takes a vow of celibacy for his whole life, whereas the other, the upakurvana-brahmacari, is a brahmacari who takes the vow of celibacy up to a certain age. For example, he may take the vow to remain celibate up to twenty-five years of age; then, with the permission of his spiritual master, he enters married life. *SB 3.22.14*

He took a vow that the next day Krsna would have to take up weapons

By tricks Arjuna took the arrows from Duryodhana, and Bhismadeva could understand that this was the trick of Lord Krsna. So he took a vow that the next day Krsna would have to take up weapons Himself, otherwise His friend Arjuna would die. *SB 1.9.37*

History of Celibacy

A Brief History of Celibacy in the Catholic Church [more..](#)

Image gallery

[more..](#)

In a hostile environment

As is clear from this summary, the speaker was quite open about the situation in which Kan◆a Consciousness in the West now finds itself. It is in a hostile environment alongside other religious groups, some of which have adapted themselves wholeheartedly to modernity and some of which continue to hold out against it. Set against the dominant ideology of modernism, Kan◆a Consciousness looks like madness and certainly like fundamentalism. The obvious question this raises is "how is it to proceed?" How are devotees to further the spiritual path begun by Caitanya which they believe can transform the world in this age?*

Devotees, of course, believe there are many vital ways to effect this change. One of these is dialogue with those in other religions and those for whom religion is of academic interest, and it was on this subject that Ravindra Svarupa Dasa addressed two lectures to his audience of European devotees. *ICJ 93 Kim Knott*

Initiation Into Spiritual Life

by *Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura*

The ceremony of *diksha* or initiation is that by which the spiritual Preceptor admits one to the status of a neophyte on the path of spiritual endeavour. [more..](#)

An improper vow to satisfy Lord Siva

One who takes a vow to satisfy Lord Siva or who follows such principles will certainly become an atheist and be diverted from transcendental scriptural injunctions.

PURPORT

It is sometimes seen that devotees of Lord Siva imitate the characteristics of Lord Siva. For example, Lord Siva drank an ocean of poison, so some of the followers of Lord Siva imitate him and try to take intoxicants like ganja (marijuana). Here the curse is that if someone follows such principles he must become an infidel and turn against the principles of Vedic regulation. It is said that such devotees of Lord Siva will be *sacchastra-paripanthinah*, which means "opposed to the conclusion of sastra, or scripture." *SB 4.2.28*

Kardama Muni's traditional standards of sannyasa

The sage Kardama accepted silence as a vow in order to think of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and take shelter of Him exclusively. Without association, he traveled over the surface of the globe as a sannyasi, devoid of any relationship with fire or shelter.

PURPORT

Here the words *anagnir aniketanah* are very significant. A sannyasi should be completely detached from fire and any residential quarters. A *grhastha* has a relationship with fire, either for offering sacrifices or for cooking, but a sannyasi is freed from these two responsibilities. He does not have to cook or offer fire for sacrifice because he is always engaged in Krsna consciousness; therefore he has already accomplished all ritualistic performances of religion. *Aniketanah* means "without lodging." He should not have his own house, but should depend completely on the Supreme Lord for his food and lodging. He should travel.

Mauna means "silence." Unless one becomes silent, he cannot think completely about the pastimes and activities of the Lord. It is not that because one is a fool and cannot speak nicely he therefore takes the vow of *mauna*. Rather, one becomes silent so that people will not disturb him. It is said by *Canakya Pandita* that a rascal appears very intelligent as long as he does not speak. But speaking is the test. The so-called silence of a silent impersonalist *svami* indicates that he has nothing to say; he simply wants to beg. But the silence adopted by *Kardama Muni* was not like that. He became silent for relief from nonsensical talk. One is called a *muni* when he remains grave and does not talk nonsense. *Maharaja Ambarisa* set a very good example; whenever he spoke, he spoke about the pastimes of the Lord. *Mauna* necessitates refraining from nonsensical talking, and engaging the talking facility in the pastimes of the Lord. In that way one can chant and hear about the Lord in order to perfect his life. *Vratam* means that one should take a vow as explained in *Bhagavad-gita*, *amanitvam adambhitvam*, without hankering for personal respect and without being proud of one's material position. *Ahimsa* means not being violent. There are eighteen processes for attaining knowledge and perfection, and by his vow, *Kardama Muni* adopted all the principles of self-realization. *SB 3.24.43*

Kartikeya as a son

Jambavati-Jambavati, a queen of Lord Krsna's; *vratadhya*-enriched by vows; *devam*-the demigod; *guham*-of the name *Kartikeya*; *yah-whom*; *ambikaya*-unto the wife of Siva; *dhrtah*-born; *agre*-in the previous birth.

TRANSLATION

O gentle one, does Samba fare well? He exactly resembles the son of the Personality of Godhead. In a previous birth he was born as *Kartikeya* in the womb of the wife of Lord Siva, and now he has been born in the womb of *Jambavati*, the most enriched wife of Krsna.

PURPORT

Lord Siva, one of the three qualitative incarnations of the Personality of Godhead, is the plenary expansion of the Lord. *Kartikeya*, born of him, is on the level of *Pradyumna*, another son of Lord Krsna. When Lord Sri Krsna descends into the material world, all His plenary portions also appear with Him to exhibit different functions of the Lord. But for the pastimes at *Vrndavana*, all functions are performed by the Lord's different plenary expansions. *Vasudeva* is a plenary expansion of *Narayana*. When the Lord appeared as *Vasudeva* before *Devaki* and *Vasudeva*, He appeared in His capacity as *Narayana*. Similarly, all the demigods of the heavenly kingdom appeared as associates of the Lord in the forms of *Pradyumna*, *Samba*, *Uddhava*, etc. It is learned here that *Kamadeva* appeared as *Pradyumna*, *Kartikeya* as *Samba*, and one of the *Vasus* as *Uddhava*. All of them served in their different capacities in order to enrich the pastimes of Krsna. *SB 3.1.31*

Krsna broke His vow

When the Lord saw that there was no time for the *Pandavas* to counteract the *brahmastra* of *Asvatthama*, He took up His weapon even at the risk of breaking His own vow. Although the *Battle of Kuruksetra* was almost finished, still, according to His vow, He should not have taken up His own weapon. But the emergency was more important than the vow. He is better known as the *bhakta-vatsala*, or the lover of His devotee, and thus He preferred to continue as *bhakta-vatsala* than to be a worldly moralist who never breaks his solemn vow. *SB 1.8.14*

Krsna's wives must have undergone vows

O friends, just think of His wives, whose hands He has accepted. How they must have undergone vows, baths, fire sacrifices and perfect worship of the Lord of the universe to constantly relish now the nectar from His lips [by kissing]. The damsels of Vrajabhumi would often faint just by expecting such favors. *SB 1.10.28*

Material desire

O My Lord! Your holy name has affectionately manifested a festival in the mouths of pious people. (devotees). Your bodily splendor, like a dark raincloud, are the black ointment for their eyes. The music of Your flute has decorated their ears. But our heart has been occupied with material desires, so, we do not desire to relish this. It does not appear beautiful to us.

Srila Prabodhananda Sarasvati's Caitanya-Candramrta, verse 49.

*kalah kalair balina indriya vairi vargah sri bhakti marga iha kantaka koti ruddhah
ha ha kva yami vikalah kim aham karomi caitanyacandra yadi nadya krpam karosi*

kalah the time; kalih the age of Kali; balinah very strong; indriya senses;vairi vargah enemies; sri-bhakti of devotional service; margah the path; iha here; kantaka of thorns; koti with millions; ruddhah obstructed; ha alas; ha alas; kva where?; yami shall I go; vikalah weak and agitated; kim what?; aham shall I; karomi do; caitanyacandra O Lord Caitanyacandra; yadi if; na not; adya now; krpam mercy; karosi You do;

Now it is the age of Kali. My enemies, the senses, have become very strong. The splendid path of pure devotional service is blocked by millions of brambles. I am weak and agitated. Alas! Alas! Where can I go? O Lord Caitanyacandra, if now You will not give me Your mercy, what can I do?

Srila Rupa Goswami's astadasa-cchandah-stava verse 11 (part 2)

Max Weber - Prophet

prophet, religious community, religiosity of social strata, intellectualism and religion, theodicy and salvation, asceticism and mysticism, salvation by other's achievement, religious ethics and the world, religions and the world [more..](#)

Meet Dr. Bill Coulson

Thoughts from the man who, together with Carl Rogers, pioneered the practice of "encounter groups." [more..](#)

Naisthika-brahmacari

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 brahmacari, observing complete abstinence from sex life for his whole life. It all depended on the quality of the student's training. We had the opportunity to meet an avowed brahmacari in the personality of our spiritual master, Om Visnupada Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Gosvami Maharaja. Such a great soul is called a naisthika-brahmacari. *SB 3.12.43*

Niyaman-sacred vows; vahanti-observe

TRANSLATION

The Lord continued: Because I am the servitor of My devotees, My lotus feet have become so sacred that they immediately wipe out all sin, and I have acquired such a disposition that the goddess of fortune does not leave Me, even though I have no attachment for her and others praise her beauty and observe sacred vows to secure from her even a slight favor. *SB 3.16.7*

Nondeceptive penance in bhakti-yoga

O King, the Personality of Godhead, being very much pleased with Lord Brahma because of his nondeceptive penance in bhakti-yoga, presented His eternal and transcendental form before Brahma. And that is the objective goal for purifying the conditioned soul. *SB 2.9.4*

Not taken a vow of perpetual celibacy

Svayambhuva Manu continued: O wise man, I heard that you were prepared to marry. Please accept her hand, which is being offered to you by me, since you have not taken a vow of perpetual celibacy. *SB 3.22.14*

Nuns gave up vows

[more..](#)

One may slip down to the lower forms of life

The danger in their rejecting this Krsna consciousness while in the human form of life is expressed in the Bhagavad-gita. One may slip down to the lower forms of life in the future births.

Others, who do not strictly follow celibacy vows, must live within the three material worlds.

The spiritual world, which consists of three fourths of the Lord's energy, is situated beyond this material world, and it is especially meant for those who will never be reborn. Others, who are attached to family life and who do not strictly follow celibacy vows, must live within the three material worlds. *SB 2.6.20*

Pandora

(Greek: "All-Giving"), in Greek mythology, the first woman. After Prometheus, a fire god and divine trickster, had stolen fire from heaven and bestowed it upon mortals, Zeus, the king of the gods, determined to counteract this blessing. He accordingly commissioned Hephaestus (a god of fire and patron of craftsmen) to fashion a woman out of earth, upon whom the gods bestowed their choicest gifts. She had or found a jar-the so-called Pandora's box-containing all manner of misery and evil. Zeus sent her to Epimetheus, who forgot the warning of his brother Prometheus and made her his wife. Pandora afterward opened the jar, from which the evils flew out over the earth. According to another version, Hope alone remained inside, the lid having been shut down before she could escape. In a later story the jar contained not evils but blessings, which would have been preserved for the human race had they not been lost through the opening of the jar out of curiosity by man himself.

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A powerful mystic brahmana

Durvasa Muni: A powerful mystic brahmana determined to observe the principles of religion with great vows and under strict austerities. His name is associated with many historical events, and it appears that the great mystic could be both easily satisfied and easily annoyed, like Lord Siva. When he was satisfied, he could do tremendous good to the servitor, but if he was dissatisfied he could bring about the greatest calamity. *SB 1.15.11*

Prabhupada Meditation

It attracts me to look at Srila Prabhupada's human side, besides the supernatural features of the saktyavasa avatara, because it gives us an authorization to also be human and yet be eligible to go back to Godhead. This make the process feasible.

Profession of Vows

Upon completion of the novitiate year, the novice makes his first profession of vows. These simple vows are ordinarily taken for a period of three years. They can be renewed for another period of time if there is special need to do so. Normally, however, at the end of the three years of simple vows, the religious makes solemn vows for life. [more..](#)

A prospective candidate

The first stage for a prospective candidate is to live in our guesthouse for a week to ten days; we might ask him to do this a few times before inviting him into the cloister. Once in the monastery he will be expected to participate fully in the life of the community. This stage is referred to as the observership, and it usually lasts for a month or two depending on each individual case. Next comes the postulancy which has a duration of six months. Postulants attend the novitiate classes. The pre-novitiate period is completed at the end of the postulancy. At this point the aspirant becomes a novice for a period of a year.

The novice receives a new name along with the black tunic, belt and short scapular. During this period of formation he will study scripture, chant, liturgy, monastic history and the Rule of St. Benedict. At the end of twelve months, if the chapter, that is the monks in

final vows, approves his petition, he may make simple vows for one year. At the time of simple profession he is clothed with black tunic with a long scapular of the professed monks. Classes for the simple professed cover a wide range of topics, including monastic and church history, liturgy, patristics, philosophy and theology; allowing the monk to choose a particular field of interest. The simple vows are renewed each year, normally lasting for a total of three years, but church law permits up to nine years.

The next stage in a monk's life begins with his solemn profession. This commitment is for life. These are his final vows: obedience, stability, and conversion of life. It is at this point that the monk is given a long black choir robe, the cowl, and assumes the responsibility of a chapter member, those who meet with the Abbot and vote on important matters in the monastery.

Religion and Religions

Let me begin with a little recent history. In the fall of 1965, a small and fragile-looking Bengali monk, the saffron robes of a sannyasi wound about him, disembarked from a nondescript Indian freighter out of Calcutta onto the wharves of Manhattan. [more..](#)

Renaissance

"What great concept was reborn in the Renaissance? The answer :the ancient idea that man is the focus of human concern. As Protagoras said twenty-five centuries ago, man is the measure of all things.

"The protestant reformation, with its emphasis on the individual need for grace, confirmed the answer. Everyone now had to be able to read the Bible so that he could determine its meanings for himself. The invention of printing made that practical;the translations of the Bible into all the European languages made it easier. Everyone was now his own theologian, and God had descended in to the breast of every Christian. " *PG.166/167*

"For a thousand years since the fall of Rome, men and women had turned over responsibility for their moral lives to surrogates of God on earth, the pope at Rome, his bishops, their parish priests or ministers." *PG.167*

"The term Renaissance man suggests a person, either man or woman, of nmany accomplishments. A Renaissance man is neither an expert nor a specialist. He or she knows more than just a little about "everthing" instead of knowing "everything" about a small part of the entire spectrum of modern knowledge." *PG134*

(A History of Knowledge, Charles van Doren ISBN 0-345-37316-2)

The Responsibility of Human Life

Mostly men are conducted by the modes of passion and ignorance, and thus they are engaged always in lust, desire, hankerings, ignorance and sleep. Out of many such manlike animals, there is actually a man who knows the responsibility of human life and thus tries to make life perfect by following the prescribed duties. *SB 1.2.20*

Sacrifice for fruitive results

Such persons are ever bereft of devotional service due to being too attached to sense gratification, and therefore, although they perform various kinds of sacrifices and take great vows to satisfy the demigods and forefathers, they are not interested in Krsna consciousness, devotional service. *SB 3.32.2*

Sacrifice to reach the moon planet

The moon is considered one of the planets of the heavenly kingdom. One can be promoted to this planet by executing different sacrifices recommended in the Vedic literature, such as pious activities in worshipping the demigods and forefathers with rigidity and vows. But one cannot remain there for a very long time. Life on the moon is said to last ten thousand years according to the calculation of the demigods *SB 3.32.3*

Sacrifices

Other necessities include invoking the different names of the demigods by specific hymns and vows of recompense, in accordance with the particular scripture, for specific purposes and by specific processes.

PURPORT

The whole process of offering sacrifice is under the category of fruitive action, and such activities are extremely scientific. They mainly depend on the process of vibrating sounds with a particular accent. It is a great science, and due to being out of proper use for more than four thousand years, for want of qualified brahmanas, such performances of sacrifice are no longer effective. Nor are they

recommended in this fallen age. Any such sacrifice undertaken in this age as a matter of show may simply be a cheating process by the clever priestly order. But such a show of sacrifices cannot be effective at any stage. *SB 2.6.26*

Sanat-kumara's extraordinary qualification

Lord Sankarsana thus spoke the purport of Srimad-Bhagavatam to the great sage Sanat-kumara, who had already taken the vow of renunciation. Sanat-kumara also, in his turn, when inquired of by Sankhyayana Muni, explained Srimad-Bhagavatam as he had heard it from Sankarsana. *SB 3.8.7*

Sannyasa

A sannyasi is duty-bound to take all these risks without fear, and the most typical sannyasi of the present age is Lord Caitanya, who traveled in the same manner through the central Indian jungles, enlightening even the tigers, bears, snakes, deer, elephants and many other jungle animals. In this age of Kali, sannyasa is forbidden for ordinary men. One who changes his dress to make propaganda is a different man from the original ideal sannyasi. One should, however, take the vow to stop social intercourse completely and devote life exclusively to the service of the Lord. The change of dress is only a formality. Lord Caitanya did not accept the name of a sannyasi, and in this age of Kali the so-called sannyasis should not change their former names, following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya. In this age, devotional service of hearing and repeating the holy glories of the Lord is strongly recommended, and one who takes the vow of renunciation of family life need not imitate the parivrajakacarya like Narada or Lord Caitanya, but may sit down at some holy place and devote his whole time and energy to hear and repeatedly chant the holy scriptures left by the great acaryas like the six Gosvamis of Vrindavana. *SB1.6.13*

The existence of the conditioned soul can be purified only by the method of engaging mind and speech in the service of the Lord. The tridandi-sannyasi of the Vaisnava school accepts three rods, representing the vow to engage in the service of the Lord with body, mind and speech, whereas the ekadandi-sannyasi takes the vow to become one with the Supreme. *SB 3.6.36*

Sastra

What can repression accomplish?

*sadsam cestate svasyah
prakrter jnanavan api
prakrtim yanti bhutani
nigraha kim karisyati*

SYNONYMS

sadsam-accordingly; cestate-tries; svasyah-by his own; prakrteh-modes of nature; jnana-van-learned; api-although; prakrtim-nature; yanti-undergo; bhutani-all living entities; nigraha-repression; kim-what; karisyati-can do.

TRANSLATION

Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?

PURPORT

Unless one is situated on the transcendental platform of Krsna consciousness, he cannot get free from the influence of the modes of material nature, as it is confirmed by the Lord in the Seventh Chapter (7.14). Therefore, even for the most highly educated person on the mundane plane, it is impossible to get out of the entanglement of maya simply by theoretical knowledge, or by separating the soul from the body. There are many so-called spiritualists who outwardly pose as advanced in the science but inwardly or privately are completely under particular modes of nature which they are unable to surpass. Academically, one may be very learned, but because of his long association with material nature, he is in bondage. Krsna consciousness helps one to get out of the material entanglement, even though one may be engaged in his prescribed duties in terms of material existence. Therefore, without being fully in Krsna consciousness, one should not give up his occupational duties. No one should suddenly give up his prescribed duties and become a so-called yogi or transcendentalist artificially. It is better to be situated in one's position and to try to attain Krsna consciousness under superior training. Thus one may be freed from the clutches of Krsna's maya. *BG 3.33*

Simple Vows

Simple vows are a period of temporary commitment and usually lasts three years. The period of temporary commitment is, however, a serious commitment and is a time for continuing growth. During these years, the monk will receive a broad theological foundation, as well as some practical experience in apostolic activities. By embracing humility, poverty, chastity, stability, and obedience, he will be better able to determine his ability to live the monastic life successfully. The community will be able to decide whether his manner of life is in accord with its spirit and objectives. Pronouncing vows is easy, but the faithful living of their spiritual summons is a life-long

task. There are successes and failures, joys and sorrows. But with self-discipline and patience, linked with sacrifice and mortification, the road broadens as one learns to rely more on God and less on self.

Solemn Vows

If after much discernment and four to five years of spiritual training the monk in simple vows would like to consecrate his whole life to God, he will ask the community to admit him to solemn vows.

Standards for Westerners

The Krsna consciousness movement has been introduced in the Western countries, but it is not possible for Westerners to go to the forest and practice the severe austerities which were ideally practiced by Prthu Maharaja or Rupa Gosvami. However, Westerners or anyone else can follow in the footsteps of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura by living in a temple, which is transcendental to residence in a forest, and to vow to accept krsna-prasada and nothing else, follow the regulative principles and chant sixteen rounds daily of the Hare Krsna mantra. In this way, one's spiritual life will never be disturbed. *SB 4.23.5*

Such a thing as an individual

Just to realise that there is such a thing as an individual's way is to face responsibility. ISKCON cannot define or legislate what each of us should become or how to fulfill our deepest spiritual needs. There is an individual level of spiritual life, just as there is an institutional one for members of ISKCON. I remember reading St. Francis of Assisi's last words as they were recorded in his biography. He was surrounded by followers and disciples and had developed a movement of thousands. He said, "I have done what I had to do in serving Christ. Now you find your way." It is not possible for everyone to imitate a charismatic leader. We have to follow him. By seeing his enthusiasm, we can become more enthusiastic in our services. It is not that we think we have to take up the details of the leader's service; we have to develop the inner meaning of that service within ourselves.

ISKCON Communications Journal #1.1 - January/June 1993
Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami

Individual expression is fully relevant in the stage of raganuga bhakti, where the devotee is spontaneously drawn to serving Krishna. However even in vaidhi bhakti, serving Krishna out of duty according to rules and regulations, there is a need for individual expression, - so that we can be human beings; but still we can only accept whatever is favorable for spiritual progress.

Kadamba Kanana Swami, July 2006

Su-vrata-one who has taken a pious vow

TRANSLATION

The Personality of Godhead said: My dear Dhruva, son of the King, you have executed pious vows, and I also know the desire within your heart. Although your desire is very ambitious and very difficult to fulfill, I shall favor you with its fulfillment. All good fortune unto you. *SB 4.9.19*

Tapomaya-yajna

Having accepted strict vows, some become enlightened by sacrificing their possessions, and others by performing severe austerities, by practicing the yoga of eightfold mysticism, or by studying the Vedas to advance in transcendental knowledge.

PURPORT

These sacrifices may be fitted into various divisions. There are persons who are sacrificing their possessions in the form of various kinds of charities. In India, the rich mercantile community or princely orders open various kinds of charitable institutions like dharma-sala, anna-ksetra, atithi-sala, anathalaya and vidya-pitha. In other countries, too, there are many hospitals, old age homes and similar charitable foundations meant for distributing food, education and medical treatment free to the poor. All these charitable activities are called dravyamaya-yajna. There are others who, for higher elevation in life or for promotion to higher planets within the universe, voluntarily accept many kinds of austerities such as candrayana and caturmasya. These processes entail severe vows for conducting life under certain rigid rules. For example, under the caturmasya vow the candidate does not shave for four months during the year (July to October), he does not eat certain foods, does not eat twice in a day or does not leave home. Such sacrifice of the comforts of life is called tapomaya-yajna. There are still others who engage themselves in different kinds of mystic yogas like the Patanjali system (for merging into the existence of the Absolute), or hatha-yoga or astanga-yoga (for particular perfections). And some travel to all the sanctified places of pilgrimage. All these practices are called yoga-yajna, sacrifice for a certain type of perfection in the material world. There are others who engage themselves in the studies of different Vedic literatures, specifically the Upanisads and Vedanta-sutras, or the Sankhya philosophy. All of these are called svadhyaya-yajna, or engagement in the sacrifice of studies. All these yogis are faithfully engaged in different types of sacrifice and are seeking a higher status of life. Krsna consciousness, however, is different

from these because it is the direct service of the Supreme Lord. Krsna consciousness cannot be attained by any one of the above-mentioned types of sacrifice but can be attained only by the mercy of the Lord and His bona fide devotees. Therefore, Krsna consciousness is transcendental. [As-They-Surrender-Unto-Me] Bg 4.28

brahmachari-vrate-in the vow of celibacy; sthitah-situated; manah-mind; samyamya-completely subduing; mat-upon Me (Krsna); cittah-concentrating the mind; yukta-the actual yogi; asita-should sit; mat-Me; parah-the ultimate goal.

TRANSLATION

One should hold one's body, neck and head erect in a straight line and stare steadily at the tip of the nose. Thus, with an unagitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear, completely free from sex life, one should meditate upon Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life. Bg.6.13-14

*karmana manasa vaca
sarvavasthasu sarvada
sarvatra maithuna-tyago*

This is the vow of the ladies

According to Yajnavalkya's religious injunctions, a woman whose husband is away from home should not take part in any social functions, should not decorate her body, should not laugh and should not go to any relative's house in any circumstance. This is the vow of the ladies whose husbands are away from home. At the same time, it is also enjoined that a wife should never present herself before the husband in an unclean state. She must decorate herself with ornaments and good dress and should always be present before the husband in a happy and joyous mood. The queens of Lord Krsna were all in meditation, thinking of the Lord's absence, and were always meditating upon Him. The Lord's devotees cannot live for a moment without meditating on the Lord, and what to speak of the queens, who were all goddesses of fortune incarnated as queens in the pastimes of the Lord at Dvaraka. They can never be separated from the Lord, either by presence or by trance SB 1.11.31

To tolerate happiness and distress

matra sparsas tu kaunteya sitosna sukha dukha dah BG 2.14
to tolerate and rise above happiness and distress
Not only from the present but also from the past.

To understand the import of the Vedas

I have, under strict disciplinary vows, unpretentiously worshiped the Vedas, the spiritual master and the altar of sacrifice. I have also abided by the rulings and have shown the import of disciplic succession through the explanation of the Mahabharata, by which even women, sudras and others [friends of the twice-born] can see the path of religion.

PURPORT

No one can understand the import of the Vedas without having undergone a strict disciplinary vow and disciplic succession. The Vedas, spiritual masters and sacrificial fire must be worshiped by the desiring candidate.

Varnasrama: Brahmanas engage in sacrifice while strictly following regulative principles

My dear lord, Your Lordship has introduced the system of sacrifices through the agency of Daksa, and thus one may derive the benefits of religious activities and economic development. Under your regulative principles, the institution of the four varnas and asramas is respected. The brahmanas therefore vow to follow this system strictly.

PURPORT

The Vedic system of varna and asrama is never to be neglected, for these divisions are created by the Supreme Lord Himself for the upkeep of social and religious order in human society. The brahmanas, as the intelligent class of men in society, must vow to steadily respect this regulative principle. The tendency in this age of Kali to make a classless society and not observe the principles of varna and asrama is a manifestation of an impossible dream. Destruction of the social and spiritual orders will not bring fulfillment of the idea of a classless society. One should strictly observe the principles of varna and asrama for the satisfaction of the creator, for it is stated in the Bhagavad-gita by Lord Krsna that the four orders of the social system-brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas and sudras-are His creation. They should act according to the regulative principles of this institution and satisfy the Lord, just as different parts of the body all engage in the service of the whole. The whole is the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His virat-rupa, or universal form. The brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas and sudras are respectively the mouth, arms, abdomen and legs of the universal form of the Lord. As long as they are engaged in the service of the complete whole, their position is secure, otherwise they fall down from their respective positions and become degraded. SB 4.6.45

Vyasa not satisfied

Like the sun, Your Goodness can travel everywhere in the three worlds, and like the air you can penetrate the internal region of everyone. As such, you are as good as the all-pervasive Supersoul. Please, therefore, find out the deficiency in me, despite my being absorbed in transcendence under disciplinary regulations and vows.

PURPORT

Transcendental realization, pious activities, worshiping the Deities, charity, mercifulness, nonviolence and studying the scriptures under strict disciplinary regulations are always helpful. *SB 1.5.8*

Vyasadeva, firm in Vow

O Vyasadeva, your vision is completely perfect. Your good fame is spotless. You are firm in vow and situated in truthfulness. And thus you can think of the pastimes of the Lord in trance for the liberation of the people in general from all material bondage. *SB 1.5.13*

Vows created by Lord Brahma

savitram-the thread ceremony of the twice-born; prajapatyam-to execute the vow for one year; ca-and; brahmam-acceptance of the Vedas; ca-and; atha-also; brhat-complete abstinence from sex life; tatha-then; varta-vocation in terms of Vedic sanction; sancaya-professional duty; salina-livelihood without asking anyone for cooperation; sila-unchah-picking up rejected grains; iti-thus; vai-even though; grhe-in household life.

TRANSLATION

Then the thread ceremony for the twice-born was inaugurated, as were the rules to be followed for at least one year after acceptance of the Vedas, rules for observing complete abstinence from sex life, vocations in terms of Vedic injunctions, various professional duties in household life, and the method of maintaining a livelihood without anyone's cooperation by picking up rejected grains. *SB 3.12.42*

Vow of a chaste woman

The daughter of Manu, who was fully devoted to her husband, looked upon him as greater even than providence. Thus she expected great blessings from him. Having served him for a long time, she grew weak and emaciated due to her religious observances. Seeing her condition, Kardama, the foremost of celestial sages, was overcome with compassion and spoke to her in a voice choked with great love.

PURPORT

The wife is expected to be of the same category as the husband. She must be prepared to follow the principles of the husband, and then there will be happy life. If the husband is a devotee and the wife is materialistic, there cannot be any peace in the home. The wife must see the tendencies of the husband and must be prepared to follow him. From Mahabharata we learn that when Gandhari understood that her would-be husband, Dhrtarastra, was blind, she immediately began to practice blindness herself. Thus she covered her eyes and played the part of a blind woman. She decided that since her husband was blind, she must also act like a blind woman, otherwise she would be proud of her eyes, and her husband would be seen as inferior. The word samanuvrata indicates that it is the duty of a wife to adopt the special circumstances in which the husband is situated. Of course, if the husband is as great as Kardama Muni, then a very good result accrues from following him. But even if the husband is not a great devotee like Kardama Muni, it is the wife's duty to adapt herself according to his mentality. That makes married life very happy. It is also mentioned herein that by following the strict vows of a chaste woman, Princess Devahuti became very skinny, and therefore her husband became compassionate. He knew that she was the daughter of a great king and yet was serving him just like an ordinary woman. She was reduced in health by such activities, and he became compassionate and addressed her as follows. *SB 3.23.6*

A vow to kill

While Abhimanyu was being killed, mercilessly surrounded by seven great generals, the Pandavas came to his help, but Jayadratha, by the mercy of Lord Siva, repulsed them with great ability. At this, Arjuna took a vow to kill him, and on hearing this, Jayadratha wanted to leave the warfield and asked permission from the Kauravas for this cowardly action. *SB 1.15.16*

A vow to live in the forest

As soon as one takes a vow to live in the forest, he must simply eat roots, tree trunks, fruits, dried leaves or whatever nature provides in that way. Prthu Maharaja strictly adopted these principles for living in the forest, and sometimes he ate nothing but dried leaves and drank nothing but a little water. Sometimes he lived on nothing but air, and sometimes he ate some fruit from the trees. In this way he lived in the forest and underwent severe austerity, especially in regards to eating. In other words, overeating is not at all recommended

for one who wants to progress in spiritual life. Sri Rupa Gosvami also warns that too much eating and too much endeavor (atyaharah prayasas ca [NoI 2]) are against the principles by which one can advance in spiritual life. *SB 4.23.5*

The vow of truthfulness

Yudhisthira, who was born without any enemy, was unfairly defeated in gambling. But because he had taken the vow of truthfulness, he went off to the forest. When he came back in due course and begged the return of his rightful share of the kingdom, he was refused by Dhrtarastra, who was overwhelmed by illusion. *SB 3.1.8*

Who had just completed his vows of austerity on the very day

O Vidura, they reached the hermitage of the sage, who had just completed his vows of austerity on the very day foretold by the Lord. *SB 3.21.38, SB 3.21.39, SB 3.21.38-39*

From the very features of the sage, it appeared that he had undergone great austerities; that is the sign of one observing brahmacarya, the vow of celibacy. If one lives otherwise, it will be manifest in the lust visible in his face and body. The word vidyotamanam indicates that the brahmacari feature showed in his body. That is the certificate that one has undergone great austerity in yoga. A drunkard or smoker or sex-monger can never be eligible to practice yoga. Generally yogis look very skinny because of their not being comfortably situated, but Kardama Muni was not emaciated, for he had seen the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face. Here the word snigdhapangavalokanat means that he was fortunate enough to see the Supreme Lord face to face. He looked healthy because he had directly received the nectarean sound vibrations from the lotus lips of the Personality of Godhead. Similarly, one who hears the transcendental sound vibration of the holy name of the Lord, Hare Krsna, also improves in health. *SB 3.21.45-47*

Why the pure devotee will ask for anything else?

Krsna is the master, controller of everything, but to the pure devotee He becomes dependent. So why the pure devotee will ask for anything else? Adurlabham atma-bhaktau. For a devotee, Krsna is within the palms of a devotee. Ajita, jito 'py asau. Although Krsna is not conquerable, but He likes to be conquered by His devotee. That is the position. Just like He willingly placed Himself to be conquered by Mother Yasoda, to be conquered by Radharani, to be conquered by His friends. Krsna became defeated and He has to take His friend on the shoulder. Practically sometimes we see that a king keeps a joker amongst his associates, and sometimes the joker insults the king, and the king enjoys. The joker sometimes... Just like there is a famous joker, Gopala Bon, in Bengal. So one day the king asked him, "Gopala, what is the difference between you and an ass?" So he immediately measured the distance from the king. He said, "It is three feet only, sir. The difference is only three feet." So everyone began to laugh. And the king enjoyed that insult. Because sometimes it is required.

So Krsna also... Everyone praises Him in exalted position. Everyone. That is Krsna's position-the Supreme Lord. In Vaikuntha, there is only praising. There is no such thing. But in Vrndavana Krsna is free to accept insult from His devotee. The people do not know that, what is Vrndavana life. So devotees are so exalted. Radharani orders, "Don't allow Krsna to come here." Krsna cannot come in. He flatters the other gopis: "Please allow Me to go there." "No, no. There is no order. You cannot go." So Krsna likes that. *SP lect NOD Cal. Jan 30.73*

Will Power and Self-Discipline

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