

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

[Respected Readers,

Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to Sri Guru and Gauranga. Before presenting the lecture below, we have a humble request.

We are in great need of photos of Srila Prabhupada, for use in Srila Narayana Maharaja's books and magazines. If you, or any of your friends, have ever taken photos of Srila Prabhupada and have those photos with you – especially formal shots, although informal are also good – and you would like to see them in the above-mentioned publications, can you kindly write and let us know? If you simply hit "Reply" to this email, you will reach us. Thank you so much.

The Harikatha Team]

FOR PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF SRILA PRABHUPADA'S BOOKS

The Hague, Holland: July 12, 2005

Some people have doubts. They think that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja has said that women and black people are very low. The fact is that he has not said it, and it is actually a wrong idea – a very wrong idea. You should know you are neither male nor female. The soul is transcendental – a servant of Lord Sri Krsna, but we have now accepted a female or male form. *[See Endnote 1]

It is not that the intelligence is low in ladies and high in men. It is also not true that black people are necessarily sudras. Who are sudras? Those who eat cow-flesh and drink alcohol, and those who cheat others. Sudras are those engaged in diplomacy, hypocrisy and envy – whether they are black or white. I will speak something more on this topic, with reference to Srimad-Bhagavatam.

You should know that we are all spirit souls. The soul is not white or black. All souls are very beautiful. Regarding the transcendental form of the soul, there is no question of who is less intelligent or more intelligent. If ladies are so low-class and so low in intelligence, how could the gopis have defeated even Lord Sri Krsna? *[See Endnote 2] Why does our guru-parampara, beginning from Brahma and Narada, worship the gopis? Why did Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu – Sri Krsna Himself – adopt Srimati Radha's mood? Srimati Radhika always defeats Krsna in beauty, in intelligence, and in all other ways. If ladies are less, why do we Gaudiya Vaisnavas want to be gopis? Who in our Gaudiya parampara does not want to be a gopi? We want to serve Lord Krsna and Srimati Radhika in a female form, not a male form. So how is it possible that this female form is lower? Don't think like this.

It has been sometimes stated in the scriptures that there are some specialities in ladies; ladies can have children. Men cannot do this, not even if they were to have an operation. If a man has an operation to become a lady, still he cannot have children. Also, ladies are very affectionate. They always have a service-mood. A boy will say, "Sister, give me water. Mother, give me water." But ladies will not say, "Oh, brother, Oh father, give me water." These are specialities.

Some persons think that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja and the scriptures discern someone's qualities on the basis of birth. This is not true. *[See Endnote 3] Srila Vyasadeva appeared in a family of sudras, and Sri Narada Rsi was also born in a sudra-family. However, whoever calls them sudras will go to hell. Srila Haridasa Thakura was born in a Muslim family. He appeared in a family in which cows were slaughtered and their flesh eaten, but he is not a Muslim.

Ramananda Raya said about himself, "I am sudra." This is *trnad-api-sunicena* – humility. Mahaprabhu said about Himself, "I am a Mayavadi sannyasi." Was he a Mayavadi sannyasi? Of course not. Do not think that He was a Mayavadi. One may say that He Himself said so, but He said so only out of *trnad-api-sunicena*.

Throw out all these doubts – the ideas that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja has written something against ladies and black people. It is not correct. If anyone has explained his words in this way, perhaps they didn't understand his idea. Perhaps they have made mistakes in their editing. He, or anyone like him, will never write like this. What is written in the Bhagavatam is true.

The Hague, Holland: July 13, 2005

Some persons have told me that when they read Pujyapada Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja's translations of Srimad-Bhagavatam, and especially his purports, they lose their faith in Krsna-consciousness. They say this is because his books state that ladies are inferior, and that black people are all sudras and cannot have bhakti. So many people who were in ISKCON left because of this.

In this regard, I want to tell you all that in the Bhagavad-gita it is written:

mam hi partha vyapasritya
ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah
striyo vaisyas tatha sudras
te 'pi yanti param gatim

[At this time Srila Narayana Maharaja called on a devotee to read the translation, as it is written in a 1970 BBT printing.]

[Devotee reads aloud:] "O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth – women, vaisyas (merchants) and sudras (workers) – can attain the supreme destination." (Bhagavad Gita 9.32)]

[Srila Narayana Maharaja then asked that devotee to explain the same verse]

[Devotee:] Sri Krsna is saying, "O Arjuna, those who take shelter of Me, although they may be of a lower birth, like women, vaisyas and sudras, can still attain the supreme destination.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] What you have explained is totally wrong. This is why they are confused and have doubts. Mam hi partha vyapasrtya. After the word 'papa-yoniya' (sinful species) there should be a comma, not a hyphen, and not the word 'like'. Stri – women – are not papa-yoni. Sudras are also not papa-yoni. Who are papa-yoni? Srimad-Bhagavatam explains this:

kirata-hunandhra-pulinda-pulkasa
abhira-sumbha yavanah khasadayah
ye 'nye ca papa yad-apasrayasrayah
sudhyanti tasmai prabhavisnave namah

["Kirata, Huna, Andhra, Pulinda, Pulkasa, Abhira, Sumbha, Yavana, members of the Khasa races and even others addicted to sinful acts can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, due to His being the supreme power. I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto Him." (Srimad Bhagavatam 2.4.18)]

They are papa-yoni, because they have no Krsna-consciousness. They eat meat and eggs, and they drink wine and large quantities of alcohol. They smoke and engage in so many sinful activities. They are papa-yoni. For stri (women), it has only been said that they have some monthly impurity. They are not inferior.

Regarding sudras, who is Sri Narada Rsi? In what class was he born? Narada was a dasi-putra, the son of a maidservant. Was he low class? Srila Vyasadeva was born from the womb of a sudra mother, and Prahlada was the son of an atheistic demon. Vidura was also born of a sudra mother, and there are so many others like him. Should we reject them? According to the Vedic system of classification, women, vaisyas and sudras are not papa-yoni. Nowhere has this been written.

Another misunderstanding of Srila Swami Maharaja's intention is found in the edited and published version of his purport to Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.26.26. We find there:

"Generally when a woman is attacked by a man – whether her husband or some other man – she enjoys the attack, being too lusty." *[See Endnote 4]

In the verse itself, nothing like this has been written – that ladies are less-intelligent, or that they cannot perform bhajana, or that they are lusty and men are not so. The verse

states: "My dear Queen, due to my sinful desires I went to the forest to hunt without asking you. Therefore I must admit that I have offended you. Nonetheless, thinking of me as your most intimate subordinate, you should still be very much pleased with me. Factually I am very much bereaved, but being pierced by the arrow of Cupid, I am feeling lusty. But where is the beautiful woman who would give up her lusty husband and refuse to unite with him?"

It has never been written that men are not very lusty. Men are also lusty. *[See Endnote 5] Moreover, it is the soul who comes in a male-form or women-form; so all are equal.

All the Rsis of Dandakaranya were male. They prayed to Lord Ramacandra, "We want to be like the gopis." Then, by Lord Rama's mercy they became perfectly self-realized and went to Vraja. There, taking birth from the wombs of gopis, they attained the forms of gopis. Were they less intelligent? We should not think like that.

Srila Swami Maharaja has written that in some cases there is some speciality in women and in some cases some speciality in male. This has also been told in Srimad-Bhagavatam. So we should not think that ladies cannot perform bhakti or that they are less intelligent or inferior – nor should we think that Srila Swami Maharaja has said so.

It is stated in Sri Jagadananda Pandita's Prema-Vivarta,

yadi caha pranaya rakhite gaurangera sane
chota haridasera katha thake yena mane

["If you wish to associate with Caitanya Mahaprabhu, you must always remember the incident of Chota Haridasa and how he was rejected by the Lord."]

What is the meaning? Ladies are very attractive and beautiful, so men should not mix with them. But ladies are also advised not to mix with men. The advice is for both. We should not think that ladies are inferior or less intelligent. We should not think in this way.

Those with doubts have quoted a statement from Srila Swami Maharaja's purport: "It may be clearly said that the understanding of a woman is always inferior to the understanding of a man." In the original verse it hasn't been written like this. I think that some of the purports given by Srila Swami Maharaja have been somewhat changed by editors. I have read Srila Swami Maharaja's books in their entirety, and therefore I know that he would never write like this.

I don't agree with this statement, and he could never have written it. You should try to reconcile such statements, and don't be worried about this. What has been written in Srimad-Bhagavatam is all right, and if something in the purport is different from the Srimad-Bhagavatam version, it is due to the fact that the editing was incorrect.

Do you know Lord Brahma? He begot a beautiful daughter named Sarasvati and began pursuing her. She at once became a lady deer and began to run, and he became a male deer. Marici was present and he said, "Father, what are you doing? You are intelligent. You should know that everybody will laugh at you. Don't do this." Marici's six sons began to laugh, and then Lord Brahma cursed them. They became the sons of Kalanemi, and in their following birth they became the six sons of Devaki, who were killed by Kamsa. They could not understand Lord Brahma, but Marici understood. He did not commit an offence, but they did so. We should be very careful.

I read everything that Srila Swami Maharaja wrote, and everything is ok – the only thing is that there is some mis-editing. Some persons cannot reconcile. They say papa-yoni, meaning sinful, necessarily applies to ladies. This is quite wrong.

It is stated in Srimad-Bhagavatam:

purnah pulindya urugaya-padabja-raga
sri-kunkumena dayita-stana-manditena
tad-darsana-smara-rujas trna-rusitena
limpantya anana-kucesu jahus tad-adhim

["Some other Vraja gopi said: O sakhis! We consider the young aborigine women (Pulindis) to be truly blessed and successful, because they possess extraordinary attachment (anuraga) for Sri Krsna within their hearts. When they see our dearmost beloved Krsna, an intense desire to meet with Him is aroused within their hearts. Their hearts are struck with the disease of love. At that time, they smear their breasts and faces with the reddish kunkuma powder collected from the grass of Vrindavana. The beloved gopis of Krsna had adorned their breasts with this kunkuma powder and it then becomes affixed to Sri Krsna's lotus feet. When Syamasundara walks about Vrindavana, the grass becomes covered with this powder. The supremely fortunate Pulindi girls smear their breasts and faces with this powder, and in this way they alleviate the anguish of their love." (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.21.17)]

In the chapter called Venu-gita, Srimati Radhika prays that in Her next life she will take birth as a Pulinda girl. Although the Pulinda girls are born in families of aborigine tribesmen and have menial jobs like carrying firewood, Radhika says, "The Pulinda girls are most fortunate, because they place the dust of the lotus feet of Krsna on their breasts. I want to be a Pulinda girl." So you should not worry about a lady's so called high or low birth.

[Question:] Could you explain what Krsna meant when He said in the Bhagavad-gita that women, vaisyas and sudras are less than brahmanas and ksatriyas? We read that in Srila Prabhupada's translation.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Brahmana refers to "brahma-jnanati". Such brahmanas are self-realized; they are not like the brahmanas of Kali-yuga. If a Vaisnava is really a Vaisnava, he will have no lust or anger, or any other bad qualities. If he has no envy,

greed, pride or illusion, then he is brahmana. He is victorious over the six bad qualities. At that time, when Lord Sri Krsna spoke Bhagavad-gita, Vasistha, Atri, and so many other exalted devotees were present. They were real brahmanas. *[See Endnote 6]

The ksatriyas were engaged in war, in controlling the state, in taking taxes, and in many other political activities. The vaisyas were engaged in business and farming, but they also served the Vaisnavas and brahmanas. Then striya – ladies – they have children, and engage in such activities as serving their husbands and doing household work. For this reason it has been told that vaisyas, women and sudras are less than brahmanas and ksatriyas. But this has not been told about women like Arundhati, or Anasuya, Gargi, Gangamata Thakurani, Jahnava Thakurani or Hemlata Thakurani. This does not refer to them.

The Hague, Holland: July 14, 2005

I want to explain something regarding my class yesterday. In the Bhagavad-gita Sri Krsna made a statement about women:

mam hi partha vyapasritya
ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah
striyo vaisyas tatha sudras
te 'pi yanti param gatim

What is the meaning? Srila Swami Maharaja has written: "O son of Pritha, anyone who will take shelter in Me..." This is very clear. "...whether a woman, or a merchant, or born in a low family, can yet approach the Supreme Destination." [Translation taken from the 1968 edition of Bhagavad-gita]

This is a very good translation. Everything is clear. This is the first edition, and it is clear here. Then, in the next edition which came out soon after that, I think the translation was changed to "not As It Is." Because the editors have no realization, they were bound to change the punctuation and wording to make it look like all women are of a low, sinful birth, less intelligent and so on. You should know the truth. If you want to know, you can read his original books. "O son of Pritha, anyone who will take shelter in Me" – very clear – "whether a woman, or a merchant, or born in a low family, can yet approach the Supreme Destination."

This is the original.

Amsterdam, Holland: July 15, 2005 – Darsana at Schiphol Airport

[Question:] Gurudeva, the other night you were speaking about the wrong editing of our Srila Prabhupada's books. Having heard your class, some devotees may become afraid to read his books now, doubting all his published books. They may be wondering if they are really getting Prabhupada, or someone else. Can you say something about that?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] They should carefully read the books of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. They should read all his books. Generally there will be no doubt, but where there is some doubt, they should see his original writing. There are so many changes in Srimad-Bhagavatam also.

[Question:] For many years it was preached in ISKCON that women are less intelligent than men.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Both women and men are transcendental parts of Krsna – jiva-tattva. *[See Endnote 7] Regarding their being less intelligent than men, there is no question of that.

[Question:] Then we could also say that if there is any doubt, the reader can go and ask a pure devotee. Yaha, bhagavata pada vaisnavera sthane

["If you want to understand Srimad-Bhagavatam, you must approach a self-realized Vaisnava and hear from him." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Antya-lila 5.131)]

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] They should see the original version.

[Question:] But even during Srila Prabhupada's lifetime, even the first time a book was published it had mistakes, because his disciples were new devotees at that time, including the editors.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] My books also; they should not be changed. What I am writing or translating should stay the same. The editors should not try to explain more. If they will do that, they may fail. They may write something wrong.

Endnotes

[All the following endnotes are from the books of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja.]

*Endnote 1:

" 'I' is different from this body. I am living in this apartment, but I am not this apartment. But the modern civilization is going on on the basic idea that 'I am this body.' 'I am American.' 'I am Indian.' 'I am brahmacari.' 'I am ksatriya.' 'I am man.' 'I am woman.' This is condemned. This is condemned." (Lecture on Bhagavad-gita. Bombay, 29 December 1972)

*Endnote 2:

It is stated in the Gosvami's literatures that the gopis defeat Krsna in word games, dice games, wrestling and other sports.

"Just like gopis. The gopis were women and not very high class woman, cowherd's men, in the village, not in town, very educated, high society, brahmana, ksatriya, no. They all belonged to the vaisya class. And they were woman, not Vedantist, not scholar. But they conquered Krsna. Why? And that is this. They heard about Krsna, and they became lover of Krsna. That is required. So that is the real qualification. Caitanya Mahaprabhu, He was so strict about womanly association. Still, He recommended, ramya kacid upasana vrajavadhu-vargena ya kalpita: 'There is no better type of worshipping Krsna than the system which vraja-vadhu, the gopis, adopted to love Krsna. That is the first-class.'" (Purport to Parama Koruna. Atlanta, 28 February 1975)

*Endnote 3:

"The Krsna consciousness movement, therefore, is a cultural movement that does not care about local social conventions. Following in the footsteps of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Advaita Acarya, we can accept a devotee from any part of the world and recognize him as a brahmana as soon as he is qualified due to following the principles of Vaisnava behavior." (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, Antya-lila 3.221, purport)

"But what is today being labeled varnasrama is an atheistic concept totally unsupported by the scriptures. Real varnasrama is based not on birth but on people's qualities and activities. One cannot reach the goal of the scriptures by practicing today's demoniac caste system. Only the introduction of daivi-varnasrama, the transcendental varnasrama system, will serve the purpose of the scriptures. This will move humanity toward liberation." (Renunciation Through Wisdom, 5.1)

"We also give. 'Never mind you are sudra. You become brahmana. Come on. Be Krsna conscious.' That we also are giving. We don't deny, 'Oh, you are sudra, you cannot become a brahmana.' We don't say that. He can also become a brahmana. 'Come on. You learn how to become brahmana.' That's all. That... The point is this equality, there cannot be. First point is this. This is nonsense. But everyone should be given the chance to occupy the best position. That is in our philosophy also. But inequality there must remain. You cannot make equality. It is not possible. That is nonsense. In your country there is not equality. Why an old woman – I have seen it – she is sweeping the street? So old woman, she should have taken rest, but she is engaged in sweeping the street. And a young man, he is becoming dictator. Where is the equality? She should have given rest, but she is obliged to work. And another young man, he is a manager. Why? Why this inequality? Where is equality? First of all settle up how you can make equal. That you cannot do. Then you are talking nonsense, 'equality.' It is not possible." (Morning Walk. Rome, 29 May 1974)

*Endnote 4:

"Besides the editing consideration mentioned by Srila Narayana Maharaja, the above quote was taken from the middle of Srila Prabhupada's purport. The beginning of the

purport is: 'Both man and woman desire one another; that is the basic principle of material existence.'" (Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.26.26, purport)]

*Endnote 5:

"Everyone is lusty. Therefore they say 'legalized prostitution.' They want it. So marriage is something legalized, that's all. The passion and the desire is the same, either married or not married. So this Vedic law says, "Better married. Then you will be controlled." Married life... So he will not be so lusty as without married life." (Morning Walk. Perth, 11 May 1975)

*Endnote 6:

"So to know God means he must become a brahmana, real, qualified brahmana. Therefore brahmana is respected. Because, brahma-janatiti brahmana. But there is no law. Lawless country. Therefore one is passing as a brahmana without any knowledge of Brahman." (Room Conversation. London, 2 September 1973)

*Endnote 7:

"On the spiritual platform, the learned person not only gives up the duality of man and woman, but also gives up the duality of man and animal. This is the test of self-realization. One must realize perfectly that the living being is spirit soul but is tasting various types of material bodies." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.12.10, purport)

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