

A Failure to Plan is a Plan To Fail

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1 A Failure to Plan is a Plan To Fail

1.1 Chebyshev's Theory Revisited

It is interesting to note how much commotion the graph in my article *called "Put the Extremists Where They Belong"* caused. Murari Gupta suggested that it was inappropriate and ill founded. Some others are suggesting my idea of BOTH systems is ludicrous, naive and even dangerous. But there is also a large community of devotees who are applauding the new approach I am taking because it is consistent with Srila Prabhupada's request that we work out our differences.

"If you all leaders cannot work together, then how can you expect the others to cooperate with you? Differences may be there, but still you have to cooperate together otherwise where is the question of my being relieved of so many problems and decisions?" – Letter to Ramesvara Vrindaban. 15, September 1975

Murari Gupta Prabhu has suggested that the graph is misleading and to make his point he gave an example based on a population that is 40% meat eaters, 50% vegetarians and 10% Vegans. He suggests that the graph implies the best way to please this population is to offer a meal that includes all three foodstuffs. He then correctly points out the obvious flaw in that conclusion because the Vegetarians and Vegans 60% would certainly not be pleased with that solution.

The rebuttal to this criticism is that Murari Gupta has not begun with a standard distribution. Chebyshev's Theory is based on a "STANDARD DISTRIBUTION", which, by definition, means the population is spread between two extreme positions with a majority of 68% falling in the middle. It can be understood using his suggested terms by changing the distribution as follows:

- 1 % Hard Core Hunt and Kill their own prey Carnaivors
- 2 % Meat and Potato Types
- 13 % Prefer Meat Meals
- 68 % Vegetarians

- 13% Prefer To Avoid Milk Products
- 2% Average Vegan Types
- 1% Fresh Uncooked Food Only Macrobiotic Vegans

If the Hard Core Carnivores were making the meal most of the population would end up very hungry! The same would be true if the Fanatical Vegans prevailed although some allowance must be made for those adventurous meat eaters who would be willing to eat tofu and lentils etc. Obviously this example is distorted because meat eaters would be willing to eat some vegetarian preps whereas the inverse is not true. The whole point is that if the hard-core extremists prevail the majority is dissatisfied, whereas if the Vegetarians prevail the majority are pleased.

1.2 The Search For Hard Data

It's understandable why your reader may have misunderstood what I was suggesting because immediately after presenting the graph I went looking for some numbers to test the theory with. *Unfortunately nobody really knows what the distribution is on the issue of Guru-Tatva in ISKCON or if it follows the standard distribution.* It may not and in that regard Murari Gupta's skepticism is legitimate. In fact 40% are HARD CORE uncompromising RtVik's, 50% are ABSOLUTE ISKCON LOYALISTS, and only 10% are moderates then his criticism of the graph is valid. *In that case it would not* accurately represent the population distribution and the suggestion of bringing both camps together would certainly not result in pleasing 68%.

The real question that surfaces is: Does Chebyshev's Theory of standard distribution apply to the population of devotees in ISKCON regarding the Guru/RtVik issue? If anyone actually knew the answer to that question then all the propaganda that is currently flying around from both camps would have been replaced by now with quantitative studies based on scientific data or carefully collected social surveys. Perhaps our friends on VNN could help us identify the interests of their patrons. Maybe they could classify the nature of the articles they have received, or take their own opinion survey, to determine what the profile is of their readership? This would certainly be valuable information.

But until someone produces the hard numbers all we can do is make an intelligent guess based on some reasonable assumptions. That is all I was trying to do by looking at the VNN Hits. I never attempted to correlate the readership on VNN to the graph. I specifically said: *"In an attempt to try and come up with some quantitative measurements..."* I thought most people would understand that the graph was not the results of a scientific survey but just a theory.

1.3 Who Reads VNN?

The other reason for looking at the volume of Hits on VNN as some type of measurable reality was to challenge the equally unscientific propaganda that suggests the RtVik fraction is *just a bunch of disgruntled devotees.* Considering all the nasty comments I hear about VNN from the supporters of the ISKCON Guru system, I would not expect them to be logging on in vast numbers. It is also unlikely that duplicate logins would explain for a lot of the daily traffic. That leaves the politically undecided, outsiders, and perhaps a few other less obvious categories.

So even if we agreed to discard half of the total VNN hits to account for these categories there are still approximately 8500 DAILY VNN readers. Considering the bad reputation VNN has within ISKCON, how often they publish Pro-RtVik material, the volume of complaints that surface when VNN publishes counter-RtVik editorials, ... it does seem reasonable to conclude that one of the largest VNN reader profile categories would be: *"Those who lean toward RtVik conclusion."* and that is not a small number. Yes, this is my personal hypothesis in light of the fact there is not

hard data anywhere. I am ready to stand corrected but until then it seems save to say the RtVik camp is not just a small group of defunct devotees.

One of the other criticisms of the graph is that it illustrates a naively unrealistic proposal because both sides are absolutely convinced that their opponents are the real heretics. In other words the graph is completely invalid because the devotee population is not "Normally Distributed" as the diagram suggests. This objection is based on the belief that everyone falls very solidly into one camp or the other.

1.4 The Quiet But Numerous Moderate Devotees

This brings us back to Chebyshev's Theory. The whole purpose of the theory is that it *gives us an idea of what to expect when all things are equal and we do not have any data*. The question is; *"Are all things equal?"* Can we expect to see a NORMAL distribution in regard to the way devotees feel about the issue of initiation?

Since I began suggesting a conciliatory path that embraces our differences, instead of pitting them against each other, I have received a tremendous amount of support from mature and intelligent devotees all over the world applauding the idea. Nearly all the exchange I have had on this subject seems to confirm that a lot of the devotees are very receptive to this solution. I have discovered that the majority of them are more concerned about the amount of Vaishnava Aparada that is going on then which system of initiation they think should prevail. In fact I have found that when presented nicely, even some of the extremists from both sides become less rancorous, mellow out, and start acting civilized again!

So despite the objection that Chebyshev's Theory may not be applicable, in regards to an apparent "Black and White" philosophical issue like initiation, my experience has been that this is not true. *It seems to me that Chebyshev's Theory is applicable and that is relieving*. There are actually a lot of devotees who are just sick of all the hot air that is being generated at the expense of long standing friendships, the little trust that is left, and a cooperative spirit. They are usually not as vocal as the Generals who have lead both camps thus far and dominate the debate arena. The devotees I speak of are not extremists and just aren't so vocal. They rarely speak up and may have never even given a bhagavatam class. But they are the devotees who keep the kitchens running, the deities dressed, hold programs within their community and have alters in their home. They are the great souls among us who understand how rare and extraordinarily the association of a Vaishnava *is regardless of who or how they got initiated*. They have comprehended Srila Prabhupada's mood and are ready to act according to that realization when given an opportunity to do so.

"Amongst ourselves there must be very liberal and friendly dealings. This is not an ordinary thing that if somebody has got some fault he should be cut. He should be reformed by amicable dealings. We are training our men since a long time. It is very difficult to get trained up assistants". – Letter to Bali Mardana Vrindaban September 5, 1974

1.5 The Threat Of BOTH Systems

It is also interesting to note that now some of the RtViks are suggesting that the idea of BOTH systems is a "Dangerous" proposal. This is peculiar because adopting BOTH systems solves the embarrassment of "Guru-Roulette", a well as a myriad of other issues they claim to be concerned about and of course it re-joins all the devotees under one ISKCON the way Srila Prabhupada would certainly want it to be. I admire their honesty in rejecting a compromise they are adamant about not honoring, but I am disappointed that they are unable to see that the

alternative is a long, hard, ugly, expensive, and dangerous road to take. It also happens to fly directly in the face of Srila Prabhupada's numerous requests that we cooperate with each other.

"We must be very careful to avoid anything scandalous in our dealings, and always keep to the highest standards of respect and courtesy. So kindly deal with such matters in future with great caution and tactfully so that our Movement may not get a bad reputation, especially among people who are very sensitive to such things". - (Letter to Amoga - Madras February 15, 1972)

1.6 No Ordinary Situation

Despite my attempt to recognize and address an objection that the graph of BOTH systems represents a Democratic ("Demon Crazy") way, still that very protest was made.

There is a legitimate concern that we do not get so lax that we start taking votes on which regulative principals we would like to change. But I believe the stability of ISKCON is at risk here and as a disciple of Srila Prabhupada that is a concern I am not able to brush aside lightly. The ISKCON ship is in very rough waters right now. Many have already taken the first lifeboat to hail a vessel from a different fleet but it is hard to believe that His Divine Grace would approve of that plan.

*"I am trying for the United Nations. Help me. This is real United Nation. Samaù sarveñu bhūteñu madbhaktià labhate parām [Bg. 18.54]. It is United Nation. So I began this movement very humbly, loitering on the street of New York. Now it has come to this stage. **Let us cooperate together nicely**". – Room Conversation March 22, 1977 Bombay*

The concept of initiation from a bona fide spiritual master is always stressed so fools do not just go off and concoct their own nonsense philosophies. Whether Srila Prabhupada is physically present or not who dares to say he is still not capable of guiding a sincere soul committed to reading and following the instructions he left in his written legacy? The idea of a living master, who can personally chastise the disciple when necessary, is rendered completely moot for the devotee who takes initiation from a Guru if his spiritual master passes away the next day.

The Vaishnava representatives of the Lord have developed two different understandings in regard to initiation and *if we continue along the way we have been going the society Srila Prabhupada gave his life to establish WILL suffer terribly. **This argument has escalated to the point where it is stupid, immature, and completely contradictory to what Srila Prabhupada would want.*** When put in proper context the initiation formality is a minor detail in the whole scheme of things and the devotees on both sides who insist on fracturing ISKCON into two camps have somehow lost their common sense.

1.7 About Time for "Mission Statements"

I recently released to the devotees leading the reform a proposed "*Mission Statement*" for them to consider adopting. It was practical, took into consideration a tremendous amount of feedback I have gotten from all sides of the issue, and consistent with all the conciliatory articles I have written over the last several months. Time permitting I will present it to the assembled Vaishnavas at the meetings in Los Angeles on Jan 16th. For those who can not attend I will also post it to VNN when I return.

I do not expect everyone to agree with my proposed "*Mission Statement*" because that is our nature. But I will be interested to see if it attracts those who do fall in the first Standard Deviation of the Normal Bell curve to come out and join me. Even if it does not I am pleased if it

will push the devotees campaigning for reform to stop making noise and go back to their bhajan kutir until they can present a tangible plan stating what it is exactly that they are proposing.

The “reform” energy has exploded like an atomic bomb all over the ISKCON world. Now it is time organize all that tremendous raw energy so it becomes like a powerful, focused captivating NASA space rocket. That is when we will see how capable the reform movement is to challenge the existing system. Criticism of less than perfect GBC policies is easy, let’s see if they can even agree on some of the basic points regarding the new laws they expect to legislate. If the reform team intends to replace the GBC, suppress Guru’s and suspend sanyasies, who do they suggest will carry the responsibilities these individuals are currently managing? This is where the rubber meets the road. Put up or shut up. A failure to plan is a plan to fail. *Without a clear plan all this talk of reform is simple counterproductive at best and perhaps destructive.* If in the process your efforts break down you may find that the “Mission Statement” I have already written is really not all that bad and I welcome you to join the first standard deviation!

1.8 Appeal to the Moderates

We need not follow a path of self-destruction if enough of the devotees I am writing for realize that there is an alternative and they are prepared to make it a reality. There are some who will continue to say the whole suggestion is preposterous. They will continue to object: *“How can two opposite camps possibly survive in the same institution?”* Actually the answer is not only very simple, but it has already been given by non-other than Srila Prabhupada. Who is really ready to follow his instructions?

“So far as your question about controversy amongst the disciples of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Maharaja, that is a fact. But this controversy is not material. Just like in a national program, different political parties are sometimes in conflict and make propaganda against each other, but their central point is always service to the country. Similarly, amongst the disciples of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati there may be some controversy, but the central point is how to preach the mission of His Divine Grace. If the central point is fixed up then there is no harm in such controversy. Every individual being must have his opinion; that is the significance of individuality, but all such differences of opinions must coincide in Krishna. In the battlefield of Kuruksetra were Arjuna and Bhishma who were fighting with one another, and because Krishna was on the side of Arjuna, sometimes Bhishma pierced the body of Krishna also with arrows. But still they remained the greatest devotees of the Lord, and Krishna accepted the friendship of Arjuna just as He accepted the inimical arrows of Bhishma in the same loving spirit. So you do not be disturbed by such controversial points. Better you engage your mind very seriously in the matter of the service entrusted upon you. That will make you progressive in Krishna Consciousness.”
- Letter to Mandali Bhadra – Los Angeles 28 July 1969

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2.2 Other Articles By This Author:

(Available on VNN under "USA" Archives)

<i>Guru Crisis – Personal Letter to GBC</i>	(October 15, 1998 - Two Pages)
<i>The Process of Vaishnava Initiation and ISKCON</i>	(October 3, 1998 - 28 pages)
<i>Drop the Bomb and End the War</i>	(December 1, 1998 - 5 Pages)
<i>Whoever Thinks They Can Manage ISKCON is Disqualified</i>	(December 15, 1998 - 4 Pages)
<i>Put The Extremists Where They Belong</i>	(December 27, 98 - 6 Pages)
<i>"The Art Of War" in ISKCON</i>	(January 7, 1999 – 7 pages)
<i>"Fail to Plan is a Plan to Fail"</i>	(January 13, 1999 – 5 pages)

(Available on VNN under "WORLD" Archives)

<i>Landmark Education and ISKCON</i>	(January 1, 1998 - 16 Pages)
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