

Put the Extremists Where they Belong

by mayesvara dasa (Dec 23, 1998)

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1 Put The Extremists Where They Belong

1.1 Common Ground Between the Guru's & RtVik's

There is a common ground that the extremists on both sides of the Guru/RtVik debate share emphatically. It is the conviction that they alone know, with absolute certainty, what Srila Prabhupada really wanted. Based on that *"absolute"* conclusion they are equally adamant about not adopting BOTH systems of initiation into ISKCON. They righteously declare that if they did that, they would be *"guilty"* of allowing the impurities of the opposing camp to *"contaminate"* the integrity of ISKCON. These *"purists"* contend that the *ONLY* way our society will properly carry out the will of Srila Prabhupada is if ISKCON functioned according to *THEIR* understanding of what he wanted.

This all sounds well and good when you surround yourself with those whom agree with you conclusions. But when we are talking about ALL the disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami that is not the case. It is clear that Srila Prabhupada's disciples are seriously split on the subject of how initiations should be carried out more than any other issue we have had before. There are extremists and fanatics on both side of the alter and the issue remains unresolved.

Srila Prabhupada did not encourage fanaticism and he had no hesitation in calling fanatics dull-headed rascals.

Prabhupada: "And who becomes fanatic? All rascals, dull. They become fanatic. Otherwise, why one should be fanatic? If one has got brain, one has got logic, how he should be fanatic? Fanatics means dullheaded rascal, that's all. The Muslims they become fanatic, we say, generally they are, because they're dull-headed." (Moring Walk Conversation December 29, 1976 Bombay)

1.2 Guru Sastra Sadhu Is Our System

Those who insist that the rituals and formalities pertaining to the initiation process can only be handled one specific way, when the larger body of Vaishnavas are clearly divided on the issue, have missed a very important point. The Vedic Siddhanta is based on the three-tier system of checks and balances called: "Guru, Sastra, Sadhu". To ignore the fact that the sadhus have arrived at different understandings on a given issue is to undermine the process that has been set in place to keep us from slipping into the world of delusionary fanatics.

At the moment there seems to be a lot of devotees claiming that: "*This is what Srila Prabhupada Wanted*" even though there are many other qualified devotees who vehemently disagree with their conclusions. It's hard to distinguish that type of behavior from the stereotypical religious nuts who do so many stupid, illegal, criminal, and often-insane things based on the feebly sick excuse that "God Told Me To Do It!" Where is the Red Phone these individuals are using to get instructions straight from Vaikunta?

The illusion fanatics create is that if enough material adjustments were made everything would be OK and we could all live life happily ever after. But that is not what happens. Eccentric people soon find a new cause to become obsessed with and then return to their critical ways because it is an integral part of their personality. They have become expert at presenting what seems to be good arguments to substantiate their radical behavior, but more often than not they are simply addicted to fault finding and then masking it. Their anger is not, as they would like you to believe, a consciously preferred way to live or the manifestation of a noble service they are doing for the rest of us feeble minded naive individuals. In most cases fanaticism serves some form of deep emotional or psychological need that the individual is often unaware of. Fanaticism is actually a curse that chains one to myopic thinking just like the Obsessive-Compulsive person is cursed with the fear that they will die if they do not wash their hands every 15 minutes.

1.3 Vaishnava Aparada Is Embarrassing and Crazy

What is so astonishing is how much we are warned about the danger of committing Vaishnava Aparada and yet how much that very offense is justified, rationalized, or blatantly excused away under the pretense of righteous Vaishnava anger, smoking out the demons, defending the truth, dethroning the cheaters, re-gaining control of ISKCON, subduing infidels, doing Krishnas work, stopping maya in her tracks, and even honoring Srila Prabhupada's wishes!

Have we not learned anything? I'm embarrassed to think what these type of devotees would have done if they were representing our movement at the historic moment when Jesus suggested; "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." We could open a rock quarry at this point. This is the same type of sick self-righteous arrogant religious fanaticism that led to the Spanish inquisition, the infamous Salam Witch hunts and the almost entire annihilation of the Native American Indians. It is reprehensible regardless of which side of the alter it comes from. It is a disgrace to one who claims to be a devotee of the lord and it is threatening to destroy ISKCON.

"One who works in devotion, who is a pure soul, and who controls his mind and senses is dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him. Thought always working such a man is never entangled." -Bg. 5.7

1.4 BOTH is not BEST,.. It's WISE

I have not been suggesting that ISKCON adopt BOTH systems because I am convinced it is the ideal solution. If anyone could find the magic wand that would have us all agree on the initiation issue as harmoniously as we do about taking prasadam then consensus to support one way would be the BEST solution. But unfortunately that is not the case. I am suggesting BOTH systems because we do not have an

ideal situation. ISKCON is on the verge of an internal managerial melt down despite all the propaganda to the contrary.

Adopting BOTH systems will preserve the institution and give management time to fine tune the details before everything gets ripped, dropped, abandoned, blacklisted, or sued, away. Adopting both systems will actually bring us all back together under one very strong campaign to serve Srila Prabhupada. The best way to address the complaints of a dissenting group is to include them in the solution making process that addresses the larger issue. In this case the larger issue is how do we protect ISKCON from the devastation of a long, painful and agonizing spiritual mutiny.

The argument has already been made that ISKCON doctrine should not be based on a democratic system of what the majority wants to believe. Some have been quick to remind us that democracy is Demon-Crazy etc. All the pundits insist that the Absolute Truth is not dependent on popular opinion of the masses and they are absolutely correct.

But the strength of this proposal lies in the fact that those who have dedicated their lives to Krishna's service are not in any common sense of the word, typical citizens. Those who have pierced through the vale of maya and taken shelter of the Krishna Consciousness movement are not ordinary people nor are their realizations or opinions.

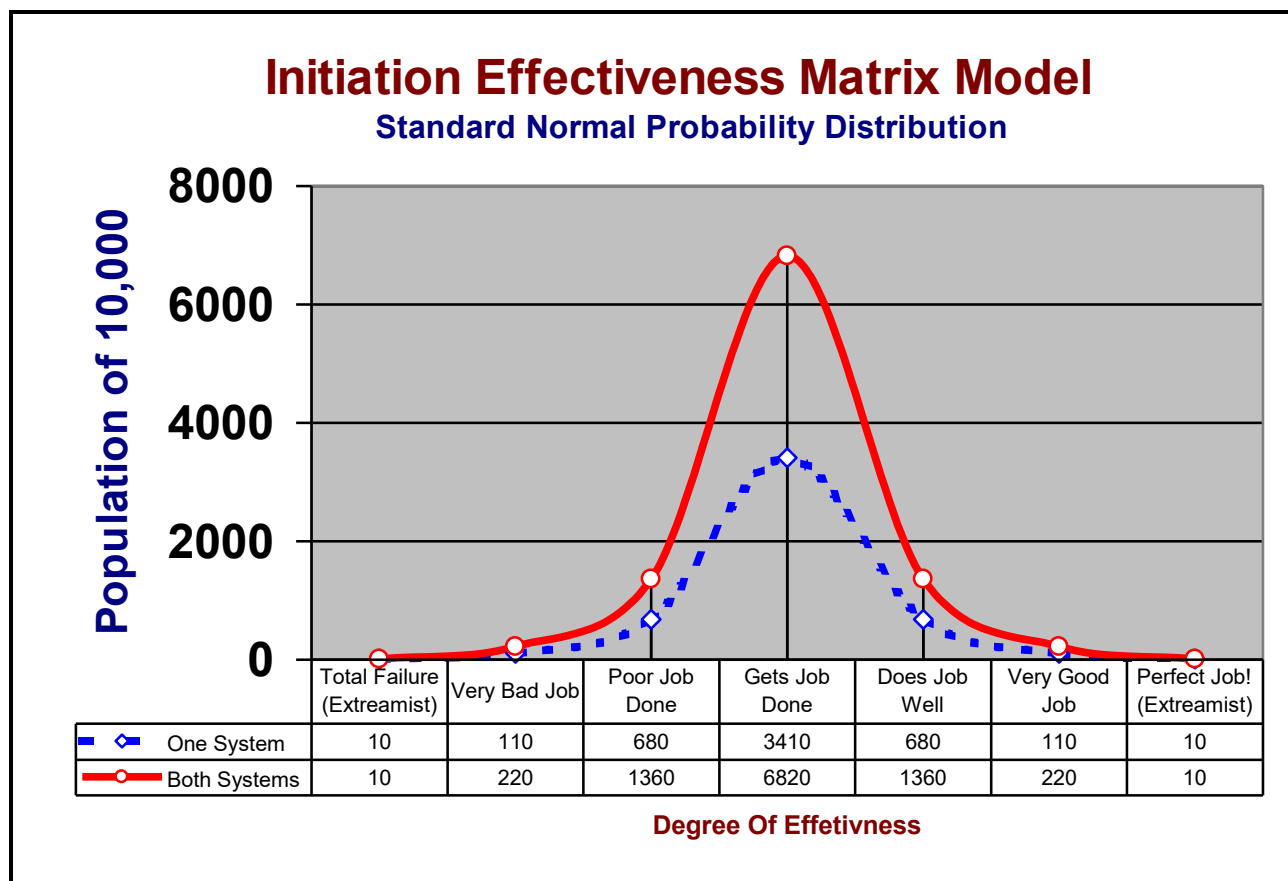
"Intelligent persons who are endeavoring for liberation from old age and death take refuge in My in devotional service. They are actually Brahman because they entirely know everything about transcendental activities." - Bg. 7.29

After studying the instructions of Srila Prabhupada and searching through the Scriptures we have a situation where the conclusion of the Sadhus is clearly divided. If a little diplomacy and compromise on a non-critical issue can unify ISKCON into one contiguous powerful movement then we are irresponsible not to make that adjustment. (Phalena Parichityate) We are not talking about changing canonical doctrine or the foundations of religious principals. We are talking about a very minor ceremonial detail that can be easily embraced if we shifted our focus from arguing like two street gangs to honoring both realizations that the collective body of devotees have on this subject.

1.5 Illustrating the Practical Aspects of This Proposal

If we were to ask the entire devotee community to rate the effectiveness of the current system for initiation on a 7 point scale from "*Total Failure*" To "*Perfect Job Done*" we would have an Initiation Effectiveness graph like the one given below. This graph assumes that the devotee community is equally split with 50% of the devotees standing behind the current system and 50% of the devotees that believe Srila Prabhupada wanted us to follow the RtVik method for initiation. A population space of 10,000 devotees is used for clarity.

1.6 Graph: Initiation Effectiveness Matrix Model



The numbers suggested here are consistent with Chebyshev's Theory of Standard Distribution that is accepted as the underlying science for all types of statistical analysis. The part of Chebyshev's work that is relevant to us is that it states 68% of the values in a given population will fall within plus or minus 1 standard deviation from the mean. It also states that 95% of the total population will fall within the next standard deviation and 99% of the population would fall within three standard deviations. This is illustrated in the chart above. Now lets see what this does for us.

This chart is laid out so each data point matches one standard deviation. What we want to notice is that 6820 devotees would fall within the first standard deviation, "Gets Job Done" if BOTH systems were adopted and only 3410 devotees fall within this range if only one system were in place. We can also conclude that if the entire population of 5000 devotees for one of the systems were to be measured against the first standard deviation of both systems, it would only be 73% as effective. That's worth taking notice of.

In other words: When we study the entire body of 10,000 devotees, we find that at least 68% of the population must agree to support one of the two alternative systems in order for the result to even get close to matching the strength, manpower, and talent ISKCON would have if BOTH methods of initiation were adopted.

If the devotee community does favor one of the two systems by at least 68% then the suggestion for integrating BOTH systems presented is this model becomes null and void. That is actually one of the arguments the GBC has been contending. They claim the RtVik community is a minority of disgruntled devotees that make up only a small percentage of the total devotee population. It's a very good argument but the fact is nobody really knows. Finding out should be the first order of business for the GBC if they really wanted to make an informed decision and were actually willing to act based on the outcome of the investigation. But doing so is more elaborate than asking for a show of hands after Tulsi Puja. The difficulty in Finding out where we stand has already been presented in my first essay: "ISKCON and the Process of Vaishnava Initiation".

1.7 The Disgruntled Minority of 16,000 RtViks?

In an attempt to try and come up with some qualitative measurements I decided to compare the readership of CHAKRA to VNN. Interesting enough CHAKRA does not share with us how many people actually read what they post. Is that just an oversight? We know that VNN averages over 16,000 hits a day. Who are all these people? It's hard to imagine that there are even that many authorized ISKCON, kosher, sanitized, GBC approved "TEMPLE" devotees in the entire world! VNN has been unofficially dubbed by at least some of the main stream ISKCON leaders as "Viscous News Network" which implies that those who read it are counter ISKCON. This in turn implies the readers of VNN are sympathetic to the "RtVik" idea. If 16,000 hits a day is the measure of a small group of disgruntled devotees, then where have all the huge sankirtan parties of ecstatic ISKCON devotees been hiding out?

1.8 Fanatics And The Third Standard Deviation

One of the most interesting thing that occurs by adopting both systems is that it moves all the fanatical individuals out to the very edges of the bell curve beyond the third deviation where they belong. If either system were to be adopted exclusively then those same eccentric individuals fall directly in the middle of the standard distribution. That's good when we have agreement. It's scary when there is so much disagreement. When we find organizations where the eccentric fanatics are positioned in the middle of the bell curve we find ourselves looking at organizations like "Heavens Gate", the "Peoples Temple" and the followers of David Koresh.

1.9 Serve Comes After PreSERVE.

Srila Prabhupada was undoubtedly disappointed by the lack of support he got from his God-brothers especially early in the early days. But still he honored them as Vaishnavas. He set the example and instructed us to sympathize with those we differ with just as he did. He clearly acknowledged that we may encounter a difference of opinion among ourselves but he was emphatic about saying we should not let these differences lead to material disruptions.

*"Even amongst our God-brothers we have misunderstanding but none of us is astray from the service of Krishna. My Guru Maharaja ordered us to execute his mission combinedly.(sic) Unfortunately we are now separated. But none of us have stopped preaching Krishna Consciousness. Even if there was misunderstanding amongst the God-brothers of my Guru Maharaja none of them deviated from the transcendental loving service of Krishna. The idea is that provocation and misunderstanding may remain between one man and another. But our staunch faith in Krishna Consciousness **may not allow any material disruption. Please therefore try to be sympathetic with any person even if they differ. The only qualification we have to scrutinize is if one is acting in Krishna Consciousness as far as one is able to do it"** - Letter to Brahmananda Calcutta November 18, 1967*

If we can not find a common ground to push forward on then integrating BOTH systems into ISKCON is the best way to preserve the dream of our Spiritual Master. This is our duty. This is how we should approach the conflict. We must *preSERVE* ISKCON if we wish to *serve* Srila Prabhupada. This is the uncontested and clear instruction Srila Prabhupada gave. Are we mature enough to understand how to do it? Are we Krishna Consciousness enough to be able to?

We have so much work to do, ***we cannot lose our solidarity. Do not cause a crack there with any fighting spirit or competition.*** Whenever I hear complaints or disturbances in our centers ***my mind becomes too much disturbed*** and I cannot properly translate my books. ***So please spare me from such disturbance by cooperating all together Godbrothers and Godsisters.*** – Letter to Malati, Los Angeles, January 7, 1974

So let them work peacefully, and you engage yourself fully in Los Angeles and BBT matters. You have great responsibilities in that connection. Let us try to work cooperatively, ***otherwise the fighting spirit will ruin our great movement.*** - Letter to Ramesvara, India, April 10, 1974

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2.2 Other Articles By This Author:

(Available on VNN under "USA" Archives)

Guru Crisis – Personal Letter to GBC

(October 15, 1998 - Two Pages)

The Process of Vaishnava Initiation and ISKCON

(October 3, 1998 - 28 pages)

Drop the Bomb and End the War

(December 1, 1998 - 5 Pages)

Whoever Thinks They Can Manage ISKCON is Disqualified

(December 15, 1998 - 4 Pages)

Put The Extremists Where They Belong

(December 27, 1998 - 6 Pages)

The Art Of War In ISKCON

(January 7, 1998 - 8 Pages)

(Available on VNN under "WORLD" Archives)

Landmark Education and ISKCON

(January 1, 1998 - 16 Pages)