

Recently I was somewhat belittled by a godbrother for my strong preaching of vegetarianism, engaging in animal rescue, and teaching of yoga, rather than engaging "purely" in distributing Srila Prabhupada's books and doing (in his words) "direct preaching". Having also seen such comments before in articles posted by devotees, I wanted to bring forward a few points that I feel are worthy of your ear. (At the very least nobody has ever accused me of being boring.)

One subject has to do with teaching yoga and the other with being an example of "ahimsa". From the outset I want it understood LOUD and CLEAR, that my "opinions" on the teaching of yoga are not meant to be an instruction for monks, sadhus and sannyasis, or anyone else for that matter. It is only to hopefully garner some empathy and respect for those devotees that are attempting to use it as an avenue to teach the topmost yoga, fighting against the many cheaters and charlatans that are teaching nonsense in the name of yoga.

It is impossible to understand the topmost yoga philosophy, which Srila Prabhupada called Krishna consciousness, unless you are a vegetarian. It is also a fact that very few souls will soon come to the point of complete immersion in bhakti yoga, shedding their former "skins". Prabhupada used to say that our standards and principles are very high, therefore "we have very few customers". What Prabhupada was able to do was miraculous, only possible for a maha-bhagavata of the highest caliber, a true "lover of the Lord" (thank you Mangalananda). How many among us can possibly engage "purely"? The results of pretense have been shown to us time and again. However, every one of us has the capacity to contribute to this great mission in some way. We don't need an institution to do so; actually we're better off acting outside of one, considering the state of our "crippled" ISKCON.

We simply need a desire and faith in Srila Prabhupada and Krishna. Baring my soul here, I must admit that I do not know "love" for Krishna. I know "about" love for Krishna and I have firm faith in the Vedas, but how could I possibly know that which is in the realm of "raganuga bhakti". Vaidhi bhakti, yes, but that is regulated and aspires towards eventual realization and attainment of what is real bhakti. The chanting of my 16 rounds is the most important part of my sadhana, but I cannot yet see and feel "Krishna dancing on my tongue". Somehow Prabhupada instilled faith in me. Firm faith is what keeps me going, but this cannot be mistaken for "love of God". I have realized that "harer nama" is the only way, but life has taught me that liberation will not come anytime soon. That ultimate goal may someday manifest in my heart, but only by the mercy of Srila Prabhupada, and in who knows how many lifetimes.

That which allows me some clarity of purpose is my "love" for Srila Prabhupada, however inadequate this may be. Somehow he melted this heart of stone and entered it for all time. I feel immense gratitude for that. He loved, and still loves, us all so much. Not only his direct disciples, but everyone who takes a step towards him. (He is available to one and all through his books.) Prabhupada showed love for all living beings. His compassion in that regard was indescribable. Even a mosquito he did not want to see killed unnecessarily.

There may be many narcissistic (so-called) yoga teachers teaching asanas (as per the recent article by Mayesvara Prabhu), but that is not "Yoga". There is no substance, for they have no substance. There is no knowledge, for they have no real knowledge. Nor are most even striving to find truth. Theirs is "gym yoga", and nothing more.

Having said that, there are many people who come to such yoga classes that are very open to finding spiritual truth. There is a huge audience coming that have realized that they are suffering and they are looking for relief, looking for something more than just physical exercise. There are

many people seeking counsel in jyotish and ayurveda that are looking for something more, the timeless search for the meaning of life. Many don't even realize that they are, until they are exposed to it. Devotees teaching yoga offer the alternative. The first thing we make students learn are the "yamas and niyamas". Any devotee who does not know what these are must learn them. They are the prerequisite for all of us. They are the foundation of dharma in human society.

There is an ever growing number of people in the west turning to yoga. Can anyone truly think Srila Prabhupada would disapprove, when it is a clever and very "real" means of bringing the "highest yoga" to those that would otherwise become the students of the cheaters, charlatans or impersonalists? Prabhupada gave me only a very few hours of his private personal association, but the words he spoke to me at these times stayed with me forever. One of the things he said to me many years ago in Honolulu when I was given the opportunity to serve him his lunch every day, was "use your intelligence how to find ways of preaching". What could possibly be the fault in teaching yoga with such goals? A more liberal preacher than Srila Prabhupada was never known before he began his great mission, and it is evident from his innovative attitude, willing to "go where no (Gaudiya Vaishnava preacher) man had gone before.

Vegetarianism is primary, essential to an ability to understand the Vedas' spiritual philosophy. Anyone that thinks they are practicing "yoga", Krishna Consciousness, or even that they are kind and compassionate, or are somehow "spiritually situated", yet supports those companies that abuse or slaughter animals in any way, is a hypocrite.

Recently I attempted to explain to some devotees why I am a vegan, UNLESS I can get milk from a cruelty free dairy, which hardly exist but for a bare few devotees (and these few devotees get mostly no support or recognition from the greater body of devotees) and other "conscious" farmers. Every single cow in a commercial dairy is subjected to pain in the milking process (organic milk just means no hormones, pesticides or antibiotics, NOT that the cows are

housed better, less crowded, in any less anxiety nor that they get much, if any, grazing time). Every single dairy cow is sent to slaughter when they have outlived their usefulness. Every single male calf is either sold to slaughter, shot or bludgeoned to death right at the dairy, or in some cases even thrown in a ditch to starve. If you do not believe me, then research it yourself.

On Facebook in a discussion I was having recently on the subject, a devotee kept quoting Srila Prabhupada saying "milk feeds the finer tissues of the brain" meaning to allow higher intelligence to understand spiritual knowledge. For every point I made, that was his only counter. However, there was neglect of the rest of what was contained in that purport in Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1, where Prabhupada is talking about "protection", including women, etc. The point was "protection" (Prabhupada was comparing the demoniac philosophy that eating meat was healthy so they killed the cows to the higher philosophy of drinking milk from the cow, never killing them. His point was not an absolute edict on the necessity of drinking milk. Sometimes I think many devotees are acting similarly to Muslims (who interpret the Qur'an and the Hadith to suit their agendas) with their "interpretations" (almost always out of context) of what "Prabhupada said" on many things. Whatever point you want to make, a Prabhupada quote is available to "use" to support your agenda. At what point does one begin to use their own intelligence and discretion?

In my humble opinion, Srila Prabhupada would have fully expected that there would be devotee dairies, producing pure, cruelty free milk from truly happy and protected cows. Then made available to all temples and as many devotees as possible. But no, regardless of the many millions of dollars spent on "Prabhupada's Palace", sannyasi and guru "lifestyles" and the gross and blatant, exorbitant waste and theft of funds for almost 35 years since Prabhupada left, this has not been seen as a need, much less a priority. A few dairies with funding could easily supply all the milk needed by the devotee community at large in the US. (Large dairies' milk is shipped across the country every day.) Has nobody ever even thought of this?!

The fact is that unless you are only talking about having milk for worship of installed Deities in a temple (it was for that reason that Prabhupada said "what can we do?" when told of the only source of milk available to them way back in the beginning), the average devotee's perceived "need" for dairy is simply for their sense gratification. We do not "need" dairy products to be healthy and if you do a bit of research, you just might find that what is available commercially is just the opposite. (A case in point is the book "The China Study". A group of scientists hired by the meat and dairy industry to study, then give findings to support their industries, honestly shared their findings in this book. It was exactly the opposite of what was intended to be found. Read it and you will not be able to argue for the case of dairy, much less for the demons' desired findings of meat being healthy "food" for human beings.)

A real devotee, a true yogi (albeit "modern day", not referring to those of another age) will take a stand. NO KILLING! Why is it that every time Prabhupada had a meeting with a priest or clergy of western religions his first point was "WHY YOU ARE KILLING? The first commandment says "Thou shalt not kill". We all know the weak, hypocritical responses that were returned which placed only human life worthy of respect, not that of other sentient living beings. Arrogance and hypocrisy have no place in the heart of a devotee.

You do not need leather, not for any reason. Non-leather alternatives are available for everything from shoes and boots to belts and everything else imaginable. Even saddles for horses are now available in other material! And why are devotees still buying mridangas from India KNOWING all the leather is coming from the slaughterhouse?!

I am not saying to throw out those you have now, but if these words I am speaking resonate as truth, then never buy another leather product. Cruelty free soaps, shampoos, cosmetics, etc are plentiful now for those bodily needs, as well. There is no excuse for anyone to support companies that test their products on animals. How can devotees be so apathetic, so indifferent to the indignity and cruelty perpetuated upon animals? Is it laziness, or is it another exhibition of

"we can do anything for preaching" (another Prabhupada "ism" regularly taken out of context and used when convenient). Or is it another instance of what I call "ostrich people"? Stick your head in the sand and pretend you can't see. What kind of example does this show? It seems the antithesis of the qualities of heart implied for a "devotee of Lord Krishna".

Due to the fact that we run a horse rescue project called "Ocala Equine Rescue" in Ocala, Florida (nicknamed the "horse capital of the world" due to the multitude of breeders, sales, shows & training facilities for the horse "business") it allows us to also constantly speak out, not only about the abuse of horses, but all animals, and to at least get some people to think a little more deeply about the facts. Today's human society is geared towards the torture and murder of billions of animals... needlessly, selfishly and with the utmost prejudice and brutality.

Through teaching yoga, as well as practicing jyotish and ayurveda, we have been able to take this an important step further in actually being able to teach "real" Vedic philosophy. Everyone that knows us knows that we are uncompromising in our teaching (preaching) when it comes to the basics that one needs to first understand, and put into practice, to actually begin to practice "yoga". My dear godbrother, friend and fellow astrologer, Nalinikanta Prabhu, has often commented how much of a militant I am when it comes to preaching vegetarianism to everyone. I simply say it like it is.

All other arguments aside, Bhaktivedanta Manor is the only temple I know of with a pukka dairy that supplies the devotees' needs, also having an ample supply of milk to sell on top. At least give credit where credit is due. I also owe a great personal debt of thanks to Kripamoya Prabhu, who encouraged my wife Yogamaya and myself in our UK preaching programs through Yoga, jyotish and ayurveda in the 1990's. (Note that we were wholly independent and separate in every way, yet it didn't stop our being able to respect, honor and love each other.)

When we had our wedding at the Manor several decades ago, many dozens of people came from all over the UK to honor us with their presence. So many devotees were dumfounded and kept asking us "who are all these people?" A majority wore neck beads, some had bead bags and all chanted with great enthusiasm during the kirtans, and whenever the maha-mantra was uttered by either of the priests, Kripamoya being the foremost one, during the ceremony. Was this a testament to our concerted or traditional "preaching" work? Not at all. Yogamaya and I taught what we knew in our programs at the many yoga and healing centers we were invited to, but what was the most important ingredient was that we became their friends. Providing them with access to Srila Prabhupada's Bhagavad Gita (which we always carried a few cases of), we then got out of the way. It was Srila Prabhupada that touched their hearts.

All I ask of any devotee taking enough interest to read this, is to at least consider my points without narrow mindedness. I am your brother and I am speaking from my heart. My heart truly breaks when I see the cruelty being perpetuated upon these innocent creatures. No devotee should support it. Here is a link to a video made with Paul McCartney as spokesperson that is wonderful to share with others to force conscious realization of the reality of [animal slaughter](#) .

India's dairies are even more horrific than ours in the US when it comes to the atrocities. If you doubt my words, [here's another](#) . Think about it.

The devotees who teach yoga are also doing so with the intention of bringing bhakti yoga to the forefront. Give me one example of another "job" (most householders must at some time do some mundane work to support themselves and their families) that holds as much possibility to spread the holy name?

If my words and thoughts are offensive to anyone reading this, if you think that all of our efforts, whether in the "yoga world", or "animal's rights world", are a useless waste of time, that we should be living your interpretation of rightful action in Krishna consciousness, or that I am just "sentimental"...go jump in the lake. I really couldn't care less. (Bet you thought I was going to come out with some false, drippy pretense of humility, didn't you?) But if my words resound positively to even a few of my brothers and sisters reading this, then it was worth the time I took away from my duties to write it. My philosophy will always remain "never be afraid to speak the truth". In the words of the late Andy Rooney "And that's what I think!"

In the service of Srila Prabhupada!