Copy of https://prabhupadavision.com/2012/02/15/is-it-appropriate/ as it stood on 2025-08-03. Saved for the record; page furniture (menus, ads, comment forms) removed; names of private persons blacked out.

IS IT APPROPRIATE FOR LEADERS TO ENDORSE BHAKTIVIDYA PURNA SWAMI?

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Sanaka Rsi Dāsa – UK: A number of friends and acquaintances have shared, that though agreeing with the points I have raised in my articles, they take objection to the forums I have used.

Posting an article on any given news site, does not require or imply my endorsement all the views expressed therein. While I acknowledge their disapproval, I do not see that I have valid alternatives at present, and in spite of whatever imperfections may be there, I am grateful for the opportunity to avail of these forums.

Notwithstanding my objection to some of the material posted on Dandavats.com, I sent a copy of every recent article I have written to Praghosa prabhu, the editor; who has evidently deemed them unfit for publication. I hold that any such considerations one may have, pale before the urgency and gravity of the topic at hand; to avoid addressing child protection issues on account of a lack of ideal forums is not a sensible alternative.

I'd like to ask a question to those who disapproved of the websites that posted my articles; with this question I mean no offence to anyone, it is exclusively intended as a way to offer food for thought. Do these same devotees feel similarly disturbed when dandavats.com posts articles glorifying known child abusers?

Some friends have pointed out the need to open a website that deals exclusively with Hare Krsna child protection issues; at present we are exploring this option.

In this article I share allegations pertaining Bhaktividya Purna Swami (BVPS). The nature of these allegations is so disturbing that some will find them hard to believe. All the information presented comes from individuals I regard as credible and sincere devotees.

As I have already expressed in previous articles, the objections I raise in regards to BVPS pertain his continued involvement with children.

It is a common occurrence, in child abuse cases, for victims and witnesses to be reluctant to file an official complaint; for reasons I will address later in this article, this phenomenon has been even more prevalent in incidents that have involved BVPS.

In this article I will address past and current events that represent reasonable cause for concern indicating that the children in BVPS's Gurukula may be at risk. Past and recent allegations suggest that the safety of these children is in jeopardy; at present I am gathering evidence to substantiate these accusations. I invite anyone wishing to share incidents involving BVPS or his Gurukulas to write to me at [redacted]

ISKCON child protection authorities have conducted two major investigations (and a couple of smaller ones) on BVPS and his Gurukulas. The first one took place in July 1991, and the second in 1999. Both these investigations uncovered evidence of extensive abuse; the measures taken by ISKCON's child protection authorities have been disproportionately inadequate.

Most devotees who have spent extended periods of time in India are familiar with what it means to be blacklisted. When a foreigner is caught breaking the law, if the offence is serious enough the police will enter their name in a "black-list" of individuals who will not be allowed back into India.

Due to the fact that corruption in India is still widespread, when one has been around long enough and knows people in the "right" places, by paying some bribes, it is relatively easy to have a troublesome foreigner blacklisted. Some senior devotees have been blacklisted; not because they broke the law apparently, but because they upset the wrong people.

Since 2006 repeated allegations have surfaced accusing Bhaktividyaurna Maharaj and the staff of inappropriate conduct towards the girls in his Gurukula. Last year parents removed a significant number of girls from BVPS's school. It is necessary to interview these girls and their parents to inquire as to the reasons that brought them to leave the school.

I have recently been informed that in 2006, when these allegations first emerged; initially Ramadevi, who at the time was the CPO representative in Mayapur, expressed her resolute intention to expose and put an end to Maharaj's transgressions once and for all.

In this connection she had a private meeting with Bhaktividyapurna Maharaj; it is not known what was discussed. What is known however, is that she came out a changed person; visibly frightened. Ramadevi flatly refused to carry on with the investigation and overnight she turned into Maharaj's new best friend and vocal supporter. This sudden switch left devotees in Mayapur perplexed.

Mother Ramadevi is a foreigner, she is a single woman in her 60s; Mayapur is her home. To the best of my knowledge the small apartment she lives in, is all she owns in the world. She has expressed the desire to spend the rest of her days in the Dham. It is alleged that BVPS threatened to have Ramadevi black-listed if she went ahead with the investigation.

There are other devotees, who do not wish to be named, that claim to have been threatened by BVPS in a similar fashion as described above.

If indeed, this is the reason that caused Mother Ramadevi's sudden turnaround, some may be quick to judge her a coward, and certainly such behaviour can hardly be deemed honourable.

However, it is important to look at the context of the situation. ISKCON's child protection authorities have more evidence and testimonies of abuse involving BVPS than almost any other offender in the history of ISKCON. The nature of the abuse BVPS is directly and indirectly responsible for is extreme and extends over a span of several years. Yet, when basic commonsense is applied to assess the sanctions that have been imposed on him, they are found to be inexplicably inadequate. In the western world, an individual responsible for transgressions of a similar nature, would have faced a considerable prison sentence and never been allowed in the vicinity of a child for the remainder of his life; whereas in ISKCON we have the Education Ministry that encouraged Maharaj to resume his services.

If BVPS did threaten to blacklist Ramadevi, she would have found herself in a dilemma. The negligible sanctions ISKCON's child protection authorities have imposed on Maharaj for his past transgressions, offer no guarantee that reporting any new allegations would have a significant impact for the protection of the children, or that Maharaj would have come to face appropriate consequences. Whereas to expose Maharaj's misconduct, Ramadevi would have had to be prepared to leave Mayapur for good, and possibly lose her apartment. It would have been a difficult predicament for her.

As we have seen in Vrindavana's recent incidents, even to this day ISKCON's educational authorities offer more support to perpetrators than to whistle blowers…I wish I could confidently say that if I was to find myself tackling such a dilemma I would have had the courage and the integrity to chose righteousness over convenience; the truth is that I am not sure I would.

Many amongst those who have only been exposed to BVPS's charming side will find such a possibility to be doubtful and probably offensive as well. The truth is that there are several indications that point to a wall of fear and silence surrounding past and more recent allegations of child abuse that involve BVPS and his Gurukulas; this fear deters witnesses from coming forward and is indicative of a greater problem. In Mayapur, we have a situation where "everyone knows", but few are willing to speak… and almost exclusively, the few who are brave enough to say anything are only willing to do so anonymously.

There are several ISKCON leaders who have offered protection to known child abusers when their victims or the CPO have made some attempts to make them accountable. In my last article I wrote about the role played by Sesa prabhu in protecting BVPS. There are a number of Swamis and Gurus who have been inviting BVPS to preach in their zone, offering him ample respect and worship. Given that ISKCON is yet to adequately address his past misconducts and that he is still involved with children, such endorsement ought to be viewed as a cause for concern.

Indradyumna swami is one such example. On one hand he has offered support and assistance to a number of children in ISKCON since the early days; some of these children had

no one to turn to for help. I have a friend who views him as her second father. On the other hand he openly endorses BVPS.

Towards the end of January, I was in Vrindavana and I came to know that BVPS was visiting with the girls from his Gurukula along with Nareshvara prabhu. They stayed in Vrindavana for several days and were joined by Indraduymna Swami, and together they toured to different places in and around the Vrajamandala. Indradyumna Maharaj was accompanied by a few of his brahmachari disciples. The girls in BVPS's Gurukula range from age 5 to 18 years of age.

Even if for a second we were to overlook the fact that these girls are mostly underage, still, if as aspiring Gaudiya Vaisnavas, we observe the nature of Mahaprabhu's interactions with women and the example he set through His instructions to Chota Haridas, it is difficult to understand how it is beneficial or appropriate for these Sannyasis or for these girls to be spending extended amounts of time together.

If we then look at the examples presented in the Shastras of exalted personalities the likes of Saubari Muni, Visvamitra Muni, Lord Indra, Lord Brahma and Lord Siva, we can understand that sex desire is something extremely difficult to overcome. It is something that must be regarded with extreme caution, especially by individuals in the renounced order of life. This is confirmed by the track record of ISKCON Sannyasis.

I wonder why it is that some Sannyasis insist on interacting with women as if they have transcended sex desire. Even if they have indeed transcended this desire, is the example that is being set for current and future generations appropriate? What is Indradyumna Maharaj teaching his brahmachari disciples by his example? These girls probably think that it is acceptable and perhaps desirable for them to seek the association of Sannyasis.

Would it not be more fitting to have ISKCON's senior ladies to train and educate these girls? Does anybody really believe that BVPS is the best person to prepare girls to become emotionally healthy and balanced women who will be able to contribute to society?

A girl that had been abused in BVPS's Gurukula, was enrolled in a different school, (one of the schools in Mayapur that is not under BVPS's control). Indradyumna Swami insisted that this girl be sent back to BVPS's Gurukula, even after he was made aware of the specific details of the mistreatment she had suffered. On account of Indraduymna Swami's insistence this girl was eventually sent back in BVPS's gurukula.

I have been told that Nareshvara prabhu is one of the few adults (if not the only one) who is not part of the school staff, allowed to freely visit Maharaj's girls Gurukula. This is a privilege denied even to the parents of the girls.

If Champakalata prabhu, the CPO director, has been made aware of these incidents, given that she is a disciple of Indradyumna Maharaj; she is not exactly in the best position to adequately

reproach her spiritual master.

Over the years, Sivaram Swami has made efforts to promote the welfare of children in ISKCON; more so than other GBCs. A while back on his website I saw a video where he was speaking on the importance of child protection. I wish more GBCs followed his example in this regard.

Sometime towards the end of July 2011 Sivaram Maharaj wrote the following comment in response to my article

> While there are many things I take exception to in this letter, one that I agree with, is that >the GBC are letting the CPO office slip off their top of the priority list. It is something that >should be addressed and I would suggest that the CPO budget is not down-graded by the >GBC, but guaranteed.

If you click this link (also available here), you will see a video posted on Dandavats.com where only last year, Sivaram Swami gave a glamorous welcome to BVPS in Hungary. There is a Kirtan party awaiting BVPS's arrival, when he gets out of the car, the devotees shower flowers on him, and Sivaram Swami welcomes him with a friendly hug; then BVPS seats on a Vyasasana and the devotees wash his feet in the temple room (possibly in front of the deities). During his stay in Hungary BVPS gave a series of classes on diverse topics including of all things the education of children.

I assume that Sivaram Swami is somewhat acquainted with BVPS's history of child abuse. If he is not, I strongly encourage him to become familiar with some of the history of BVPS's involvement in the horrors perpetrated to the children in the Mayapur Gurukula. My concern is that prior to inviting BVPS in Hungary, Sivaram Swami may not have duly informed his disciples, nor expressed his disapproval of BVPS's past wrongdoings.

If my concerns are founded, this causes a problem. In giving BVPS such an extravagant welcome, effectively what Sivaram Swami is saying to his disciples is, "I approve of this man (and everything he stands for)". It is a tacit endorsement of the abuse that BVPS is responsible for.

I would have a less to object, if my concerns are unfounded, and indeed Sivaram Swami has given his disciples a comprehensive briefing on BVPS's misconducts, explaining that despite BVPS's extensive responsibility in the severe child abuse that took place in Mayapur, for whatever reasons, he still values his friendship with BVPS, his knowledge of Vedic mantras etc…etc…

I am also aware of another instance where Sivaram Swami wrote a letter of support to help a person who was being investigated for child mistreatment by the CPO and was later found guilty.

A number of other ISKCON gurus and leaders regularly invite BVPS to visit the former Soviet Union to attend festivals and preaching programs.

Given that to date BVPS has not adequately acknowledged nor apologized for his responsibility in the past child abuse in Mayapur; that he is still involved with children; and that more recent allegations have surfaced that are yet to be appropriately investigated; any glorification of BVPS by ISKCON leaders, that does not include a comprehensive history and a necessary distancing and disapproval of BVPS's transgressions, will be a form of endorsement of everything BVPS stands for, including child abuse.

This is that much more relevant if we take into account the well known naivety and lack of information that is prevalent amongst the devotees of the former Eastern-Bloc. In my opinion gurus who invite BVPS to visit their zone, but neglect to address BVPS's history are doing a disservice to child protection, to their disciples and to ISKCON. As leaders, they are failing to take the necessary stance in regards to child protection.

While I appreciate the praiseworthy efforts made by these two sannyasis; child protection cannot be optional or selective. Given the position they occupy, with their actions, they are setting precedents that discount the gravity of, and can therefore encourage the perpetuation of child abuse. The inconsistency between their actions and their words weakens the merits of their stated intentions and whatever efforts they have made for the protection of ISKCON's children.

In regards to Sivaram Maharaj and Indradyumna Maharaj, my objections are specific to the instances mentioned. Although I understand that my writing may come to have an adverse effect for their overall reputation; it is not my intention to cast a judgment on their character, rather I hope that this will encourage them to give more thought to the consequences of their actions and hopefully, also to act with more coherency, in ways that will be conducive for the protection of children in ISKCON.

P.S. Correction: In my past articles I have written that Champakalata Prabhu, the CPO Director, is a single mother. It has been brought to my attention that this is not the case. I wish to offer my apologies to her and to the vaisnava community for the disturbance this has caused. In the future I will make greater efforts to verify information before writing.