

**A Response to Hridayananda das Goswami's  
“Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality”**

**&**

**Sex Life Srila Prabhupada Sanctioned**

*by Krishna-kirti das*

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## Table of Contents

PREFACE .....	3
A RESPONSE TO HRIDAYANANDA DAS GOSWAMI’S “VAISNAVA MORAL THEOLOGY AND HOMOSEXUALITY” .....	5
INDIRECT VERSUS DIRECT UNDERSTANDING .....	8
USE OF AWKWARD AND UNFAMILIAR TERMS .....	9
Monogamy Resembles Marriage.....	10
DIFFERENCE IN AUDIENCE .....	12
QUOTING SRILA PRABHUPADA OUT OF CONTEXT.....	13
CONCLUSION .....	14
SEX LIFE SRILA PRABHUPADA SANCTIONED.....	18
“WHAT IS ILLICIT SEX?” .....	18
SEX AND MARRIAGE AROUND THE WORLD .....	19
OMITTED DOES NOT MEAN UNIMPLIED .....	21
DIRECT STATEMENTS VERSUS INDIRECT STATEMENTS .....	21
CONCLUSION .....	22
APPENDIX .....	24

## Preface

The two essays presented herein together form a critical response to the ideas presented in Hridayananda das Goswami's essay "Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality," published on the internet in February of 2005. The essays that comprise this work are not a criticism of Goswami's character, nor do they insinuate that he had any ulterior motive in presenting them. I, the author of these essays, believe Goswami's character to be without fault and that he is devoid of any ill intention. In writing these essays I have made every effort to avoid statements or language that suggests otherwise.

However, because Goswami himself is an important leader in ISKCON and a spiritual master, some of his confidantes, well-wishers, and disciples could still be upset by the very act of publishing a work such as this and take offense with its author. The reaction could include demands for apology, for censorship, and for punitive measures. In the midst of these troubled times, an ISKCON leadership that is anxious to maintain a modicum of peace is sometimes all too willing to satisfy the complainants.

Although there are some cases where this response is justified, it would be against ISKCON's best interests to censure this work because dialectic is a necessary part of any strong and vibrant intellectual culture, and dialectic is not possible without giving voice to opposing ideas. In his essay, which defends a notion that Goswami calls "gay monogamy," he has presented an idea that is as radical as it is compelling. If for the sake of "peace" ideas that opposed it were to be censored, how could anyone be reasonably sure—including Goswami himself—that the unopposed idea was without serious flaw or without substantial doubt? Just as no kshatriya worthy of being called one would ever want his valor to remain untested by battle, no serious intellectual worthy of his erudition would want his best ideas to remain unchallenged. Hridayananda Goswami is a serious intellectual, so it is in this spirit that these two essays are presented here—much as how Arjuna at the onset of a battle once saluted Bhishmadeva and Dronacharya each with an arrow shot into the ground before their feet.

The first essay presented here, "A Response to Hridayananda Goswami's 'Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality'," is concerned with the role of Srila Prabhupada's authority in Goswami's approach to understanding moral issues with regard to homosexuality. The second essay, "Sex Life Srila Prabhupada Sanctioned," is concerned with Goswami's approach to reading Srila Prabhupada's statements. This second essay examines some of Srila Prabhupada's statements that Goswami says suggest him that Srila Prabhupada taught a greater ("ideal") and lesser ("real") version of the no-illicit-sex rule.

Many who read this essay will be interested to know that I am also Hridayananda das Goswami's disciple. A disciple challenging his spiritual master in public is generally an objectionable act. Yet in the history of the Vedic tradition, it has happened. Under exceptional circumstances, gurus and disciples have sometimes opposed each other. The fact that Goswami and I are related as guru and disciple will likely make some curious to find out more about why I have taken this extraordinary step. For now, it will be sufficient to consider that in ISKCON most devotees spend most of their time serving in the association of senior devotees other than their guru. From that association comes all kinds of different desires and convictions. I am no exception to this.

Prior to writing and publishing these essays, I had engaged in a protracted email correspondence with Goswami for the sake of trying to better understand his ideas, as he presented them in his essay. Another objective of the correspondence was to present to Goswami my own objections to his ideas. Having this correspondence was initially Goswami's suggestion. While the former discussion of his own views was fruitful, as I have alluded to in both of my essays, when I finally presented Goswami with my specific objections, he declined to discuss them. At that time, in the last of our correspondence, I had declared to him my intention to make public those objections—at least for the sake of providing an open opportunity for others to respond to them, if not Goswami himself.

Anyone who reads this should not make the mistake of thinking this is merely a personal dispute between my guru and me. It is not. There are many devotees within ISKCON who share many if not all the views presented herein. At the very least, I hope that I have clearly and concisely presented the most essential objections and issues that we all share. I thank the devotees who have offered me encouragement and support along the way, and I offer them my humble obeisances.

I offer my obeisances to my spiritual master, Hridayananda das Goswami. In presenting these essays, I have meant you no malice. But please understand: I would rather be an outcast and have my arguments given a thoughtful hearing instead of an insider whose arguments are never heard. I offer my obeisances at your feet.

And finally, I offer my obeisances at the feet of my param-guru, Srila Prabhupada. Without you, where would we all be? Please have mercy on me.

Hare Krishna.

## **A Response to Hridayananda das Goswami's “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality”**

In February of 2005, Hridayananda das Goswami published an essay that presented his understanding of Vaisnava moral theology and how it could be used to help others struggling with homosexuality. The title of that essay is “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality,”<sup>1</sup> and its purpose was to answer the objections raised by other Vaisnavas to his initial recommendation that it is in “ISKCON’s best interests” to offer “serious, formal and public recognition and appreciation” of what he calls “gay monogamy.”<sup>2</sup>

His essay is in three parts. The first part presents a preliminary system of ethics based on primary, Gaudiya Vaisnava scriptures such as the Srimad-Bhagavatam and the Mahabharata. The second part is a survey of homosexuality in those scriptures and a “guru-sadhu-shastra” analysis of the survey’s findings. The third part is the application of his system of ethics to the circumstance of people who are homosexual.

The first part of Goswami’s essay presents a solid case for the ethical system he advocates. Indeed, from an ISKCON leader it is the first essay that presents a systematic ethics that addresses a highly controversial, modern issue (homosexuality), which, as time goes on, will exert more and more pressure on ISKCON. This development is important because it tackles the huge, gray area of situations where recognized moral principles come into conflict with one another.

The second part of Goswami’s essay tries to identify specific, authoritative statements from Vaisnava literature on the matter of homosexuality. This part is important because it attempts to establish the applicability of his ethical system to the issue of homosexuality and society. The third part of Goswami’s essay demonstrates how his ethical system will determine a set of moral rules that, according to Goswami, are likely to elevate the moral condition of homosexuals. Although the first part of his essay is an excellent and much needed presentation of Vaisnava ethics, the second and third parts never came close to addressing the substance of the objections he initially set out to address. This essay is mainly concerned with the second and third parts of Goswami’s essay.

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<sup>1</sup> Hridayananda Goswami, “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality,” Feb. 2005, [Acharyadeva.com](http://www.acharyadeva.com), 7 Jan. 2007 <[http://www.acharyadeva.com/pdf/Vaishnava\\_Moral\\_Theology\\_and\\_Homosexuality.pdf](http://www.acharyadeva.com/pdf/Vaishnava_Moral_Theology_and_Homosexuality.pdf)>

<sup>2</sup> Hridayananda das Goswami, “Gay monogamy preferred to promiscuity,” 19 Dec. 2004, [Jagannath’s Chakra](http://chakra.org/discussions/GenDec19_04.html), 25 Dec. 2006 <[http://chakra.org/discussions/GenDec19\\_04.html](http://chakra.org/discussions/GenDec19_04.html)>

Those who have protested Goswami's recommendation point out that it stands radically apart from Srila Prabhupada's consistent and unequivocal opposition to homosexuality. Although Srila Prabhupada had disciples who were homosexual and in many cases was aware of their homosexuality, there is no record of his ever giving it any encouragement. On the contrary, he consistently criticized it whenever it became a topic of discussion.<sup>3</sup> If gay monogamy is in line with Srila Prabhupada and the rest of the parampara, then why does it so radically differ from Srila Prabhupada's own statements about homosexuality?

The perceptions of this radical disconnect between Goswami's recommendation for gay monogamy on the one hand and Srila Prabhupada on the other is captured in this letter:

I am very sorry that you have taken to homosex. It will not help you advance in your attempt for spiritual life. In fact, it will only hamper your advancement. I do not know why you have taken to such abominable activities. What can I say? Anyway, try to render whatever service you can to Krishna. Even though you are in a very degraded condition Krishna, being pleased with your service attitude, can pick you up from your fallen state. You should stop this homosex immediately. It is illicit sex, otherwise, your chances of advancing in spiritual life are nil. Show Krishna you are serious, if you are.<sup>4</sup>

In this letter there is no concession for homosexual activity—there is only criticism for it. Yet at least for the sake of purification Srila Prabhupada encourages his disciple to serve Krishna. Although Goswami has recommended gay monogamy as the merciful solution, no devotee had ever considered Srila Prabhupada's reply unmerciful. If mercy to devotees struggling with homosexuality does not require anything like gay monogamy, and if, as Srila Prabhupada said, homosexual sex will not help one advance in spiritual life, why does Goswami think otherwise?

Devotees who hold this objection believe Srila Prabhupada's consistently stated views on homosexuality to be an essential reality check, and they believe that Goswami's recommendation remains untested against it. At the very least, his essay gives us no inkling that his recommendation has been so tested.

That Goswami never addressed this objection suggests that he was not so concerned with responding to devotees who actually had objections but was more concerned with reassuring and reinforcing the convictions of devotees predisposed to accept a recommendation like gay monogamy. For Goswami's essay, the model reader is a devotee with a set of presumptions and beliefs that can accommodate the virtual absence of Srila Prabhupada's stated views on homosexuality. Indeed, an outstanding characteristic of Goswami's essay is the absence of a representative sample of these views. His essay does not come close to having one. Those who resemble the model reader of Goswami's essay will not be bothered by this omission.

This omission is significant because it points to the use of an interpretive approach whose consequences reach well beyond the issue of homosexuality. In his essay, for example, Goswami highlights the widespread situation of householders not being able to maintain their vows with regard to sexual activity. He uses them to illustrate the difference between what he calls the "ideal" (sex only for procreation) and the "real" (sex only within marriage) version of the "no illicit sex" rule, and then he makes this statement (bolding emphasis added):

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<sup>3</sup> Srila Prabhupada's consistent objection to homosexuality is well documented by H.H. Danavir Goswami in the essay "Chaste Harlots" 7 Feb. 2005 <[http://www.rvc.edu/news/chaste\\_harlots.html](http://www.rvc.edu/news/chaste_harlots.html)>

<sup>4</sup> Prabhupada, "Letter to Lalitananda." 26 May 1975.

in a strict sense, all initiated devotees must vow to give up illicit sex, ie sex that is not for procreation. That is the ideal, however it is not the real. The real situation in ISKCON is that many, many householders follow the easier, less ideal version of the rule: no sex outside of marriage. **Prabhupada himself at times taught both the ideal and, for many, the “real” version of this rule, the version they can actually follow.**<sup>5</sup>

Compare the last sentence in the above statement with an official statement made by the GBC in 2001 (bolding emphasis added):

it is resolved THAT: the GBC Body wishes to clarify that **according to Srila Prabhupada's teachings, sex life according to religious principles followed by Gaudiya Vaisnavas is for the propagation of children, not for any other purpose. . .**<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the GBC addressed the very same problem of some devotees' inability to follow their vows:

While Srila Prabhupada's definition of illicit sex is clear, it is also clear that some devotees have difficulty maintaining this initiation vow. The GBC recognizes this, and suggests that rather than trying to adjust Srila Prabhupada's definition we should go on with devotional service and humbly and sincerely keep endeavoring to reach the proper standard.<sup>7</sup>

Srila Prabhupada either taught his disciples two versions of this rule, as Goswami claims, or, as the GBC claims, Srila Prabhupada taught only one version. Because there cannot be both a dual version and a single-only version of the no illicit sex rule, Goswami's statement and the official GBC statement are incompatible. Both statements cannot be true at the same time.<sup>8</sup>

The radical difference and incompatibility of these two statements points to similarly radical and important differences in the way those who made these statements read and interpret scripture. Because Goswami's approach can almost certainly be applied to a wide variety of issues besides that of homosexuality, the interpretive approach he used to reach his conclusion is more important than whether he came to the right conclusion. Indeed, we have just witnessed his approach applied to the circumstance of fallen householders, who of course are not homosexual.

This essay is therefore not so much concerned with the truth or falsity of Goswami's ethical conclusions about homosexuality. Instead, it is primarily concerned with the nature of his approach to understanding such issues. In advocating gay monogamy, Hridayananda das Goswami employs a number of interpretive strategies and rhetorical devices that cooperatively have the effect of bypassing what could be reasonably considered Srila Prabhupada's consistent views of sexuality and homosexuality. This essay presents an analysis of Goswami's approach, examines its effects, and discusses how that approach, if it becomes prominent, might affect ISKCON's future.

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<sup>5</sup> Goswami, "Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality"

<sup>6</sup> ISKCON GBC, "Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the ISKCON GBC Society Sri Dham Mayapur, February 7 -19, 2001," Chakra, <<http://www.oldchakra.com/articles/2001/03/24/gbc2001/index.htm>>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> There is also the remote possibility that neither claim is true. However, the evidence in favor of at least one of the claims presented is compelling, so the possibility of neither claim being true can be discarded.

## ***Indirect Versus Direct Understanding***

As regards to understanding illicit sex, Goswami privileges an interpretive strategy for reading shastra over an “as it is” reading. In his essay, Goswami makes a compelling case for the need to accommodate people where they are “really” at instead of holding them to an ideal they cannot follow. Goswami characterizes this difference between what people can do and what they should do as a difference between the “real” and the “ideal.” As he points out, sometimes there aren’t rules to deal with particular cases. In those cases, the following interpretive, moral strategy he adduced may be applied:

- 1) The ideal is enjoined.
- 2) That which violates the ideal is prohibited.
- 3) A concession is made to those who simply cannot or will not follow the ideal.
- 4) Those who accept these concessions are accepted within society, however...
- 5) The dangers and repercussions of accepting this concession are clearly indicated.<sup>9</sup>

The problem with Goswami’s “ideal” versus “real” interpretation of shastric rules is that, while it might be correct, this method of interpretation can still come into direct conflict with shastra—especially where shastra comprehensively covers the less-than-ideal cases. The other interpretive strategy devotees are more familiar with is a direct, “as it is” reading of shastra. Srila Prabhupada likened this “as it is” reading to taking medicine according to the direction on the label of a medicine bottle or according to a physician.<sup>10</sup> If there is a conflict between these two methods of interpretation, the question arises as to which interpretive strategy will be privileged—the “ideal” versus “real” interpretation or the “as it is” reading?

In the case of grihasthas, Goswami has addressed the rule of “no illicit sex”—a rule that devotees vow to follow at the time of initiation. Since this vow clearly belongs to the set of rules and regulations associated with sadhana-bhakti, it is associated with Bhagavad-gita 12.9: “*if you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga.*” The previous verse, 12.8, refers to the ideal (always think of Krishna), and the following verse, 12.10, prescribes work for the sake of Krishna. Verses after 12.10 are prescriptions for people who aren’t even devotees. This gradation nicely covers the deficient condition Goswami tries to address with his “ideal” versus “real” approach.

It is important to note that this graduated list of rules is comprehensive. According to Gita verse 12.10, devotees who cannot follow the rules of sadhana-bhakti can work for Krishna. By doing so they “*will come to the perfect stage.*” This stage of advancement is not defined by sense control, *yama, niyama, etc.*, but by some work for the sake of Krishna. If the “real version” of verse 12.9 is in actuality verse 12.10, then why even say, for example, that there is such a thing as a “real” version of the “no illicit sex” rule?

If the no illicit sex rule is a necessary condition for advancement at the level of sadhana-bhakti, and the shastras a) do not provide an alternative rule that is valid *within* the domain of sadhana-bhakti, and b) the shastras cover the case of deficiency, then constructing an alternative, “lesser version” of the rule is unnecessary.

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<sup>9</sup> Goswami, “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality,” 8

<sup>10</sup> Prabhupada, [Bhagavad-gita As It Is](#), Introduction



Privileging a more interpretive strategy over an “as it is” reading can also lead to very opposite conclusions. As already described at the beginning of this essay, the GBC unequivocally stated in 2001 that Srila Prabhupada taught his disciples only one version of the no illicit sex rule, not two, as Goswami has suggested. This is not to say that Goswami in every case privileges an indirect understanding of shastra where a direct understanding is clear. However, in the case of understanding illicit sex, his decision to apply an interpretive strategy despite the “as it is” reading being clear and comprehensive is suspect.

## ***Use of Awkward and Unfamiliar Terms***

Goswami uses awkward and unfamiliar terms that have the effect of distracting readers from making straightforward comparisons between his own statements and Srila Prabhupada’s own relevant statements. In his analysis of the Bhagavatam incident of Brahma fleeing the demons, who approached him for sex, Goswami uses the term “mutually consensual homosexuality.” Does it matter whether the object of the demon’s sexual advance (Brahma) was willing or unwilling?

It could be said that any sort of sexual advance with an unwilling partner is objectionable. However, in the purport of SB 3.20.26,<sup>11</sup> Srila Prabhupada did not proscribe the advance on account of the unwillingness of Brahma. Instead, Prabhupada specifically condemned it for being homosexual. That the encounter wasn’t “mutually consensual” makes no difference. The term “mutually consensual homosexuality” has the effect of distracting reader from this fact.

Some other awkward terms Goswami uses are “straightforward homosexual way” and “bi-sexual.” He offers a lengthy justification for their use, quoting the commentaries of some previous acharyas and showing that the demons were also attracted to a beautiful, female form. His usage suggests a doubtful choice: that one is either completely and unambiguously a homosexual or that one is not a homosexual. However, Srila Prabhupada’s comments to SB 3.20.29 show that he also knew that the acharyas said the demons were attracted to a feminine form, and he concurred.<sup>12</sup> In the light of Srila Prabhupada’s paradoxical comments in SB 3.20.26 and 29, is Goswami’s black-and-white choice between “straightforward” homosexuality and non-homosexuality justified?

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<sup>11</sup> “It appears here that the homosexual appetite of males for each other is created in this episode of the creation of the demons by Brahma. In other words, the homosexual appetite of a man for another man is demoniac and is not for any sane male in the ordinary course of life.” SB 3.20.26 purport.

<sup>12</sup> “The demons took the approach of the evening twilight to be a beautiful woman, and they began to adore her in various ways. They imagined the twilight to be a very beautiful woman with tinkling bangles on her feet, a girdle on her hips, and beautiful breasts, and for their sexual satisfaction they imagined the appearance of this beautiful girl before them.” SB 3.20.29 purport.

Variation in sexual preference can also be described as a rainbow-like continuum between idealized conceptions of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Since in this world there is no such thing as an “ideal” heterosexual or homosexual, real-world sexual preference falls somewhere in between these two conceptual opposites. In individuals, it will tend to be near one end or the other and sometimes near the middle. If sexual preference is a continuum (after all, there *are* only two sexes to choose from), then it is possible that someone can have both heterosexual and homosexual desires at the same time. Just as purple is a composite of red and blue, “bi-sexuality” can be seen as a composite of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Viewing sexual preference as a continuum at least has the virtue of affirming that Srila Prabhupada’s statement in SB 3.20.26 (that the demons were homosexually attracted to Brahma) and his affirmation in SB 3.20.29 (that the demons were attracted to a female form) are both true. If “bi-sexual” or a non-“straightforward homosexual way” includes homosexual, then Goswami’s choice of terms here is also a distraction.

## Monogamy Resembles Marriage

The term “gay monogamy” has probably raised more objections than any of the other awkward terms Goswami has used. Although he has said that he does “not favor gay marriages,”<sup>13</sup> he has nevertheless recommended “serious, formal and public recognition and appreciation” of gay monogamy.<sup>14</sup> Those who object to the term “gay monogamy” generally do so because monogamy and marriage closely resemble one another.

As the word “monogamy” pertains to humans, the American Heritage dictionary (2000) provides the following definitions:

1. The practice or condition of having a single sexual partner during a period of time.
2. a. The practice or condition of being married to only one person at a time.  
b. The practice of marrying only once in a lifetime.

Furthermore, the word “monogamy” derives from the Greek *monos* (single, alone) and *gamos* (marriage); “monogamy” literally means “marrying only once.”<sup>15</sup> The American Heritage dictionary defines marriage as follows:

1. a. The legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife.  
b. The state of being married; wedlock.  
c. A common-law marriage.  
d. A union between two persons having the customary but usually not the legal force of marriage: a same-sex marriage.

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<sup>13</sup> Hridayananda das Goswami, “Statement from H.H. Hridayananda Maharaja,” 10 June 2006, Dandavats, 6 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.dandavats.com/?p=46>>

<sup>14</sup> Goswami, “Gay monogamy preferred to promiscuity”

<sup>15</sup> “monogamy,” Online Etymology Dictionary, 19 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=monogamy&searchmode=none>>

Goswami's usage of the word "monogamy" is according to its primary dictionary usage. However, in terms of meaning it is notable that "monogamy" closely resembles "marriage." The categories they each represent are closely related. This similarity of meaning is also reflected in a similarity of functioning.

In terms of functioning, monogamy implies a natural tendency toward acting more or less as if one were married. Outside of sex, marriage includes sharing wealth, sharing residence, increased intimacy, and being seen as respectable in society. For obvious reasons, it is more convenient for a monogamous couple to share a residence. Sharing a residence leads to other marriage-like behavior such as sharing other resources. Just as people get married so that others will approve their relationship, monogamous couples also seek at least informal approval for their relationship from others. Common experience tells us monogamous relationships closely resemble married ones.

If marriage and monogamy closely resemble one another, then so will gay marriage and gay monogamy. Between them, the common behavior of seeking approval matters because approving of homosexuality is exactly what Srila Prabhupada protested.

"Now the priestly order supporting homosex. I was surprised. They are going to pass resolution for getting married between man to man. The human society has come down to such a degraded position. . . . People are becoming less than animal. This is all due to godlessness. . . . They simply go to the untruth by mental speculation."<sup>16</sup>

Neologisms (newly coined words or terms) are often used as euphemisms for more familiar but stigmatized terms. In this case, the point of a neologism is to avoid dealing with a stigma. Although any stigma that happens to be attached with a term is often irrational and unfortunate, sometimes the stigma is well deserved. In this case, the neologism acts to make unobjectionable what is truly objectionable. "Pregnancy termination," for example, was formerly a neologism for "abortion." Within the social context of ISKCON, "gay monogamy," which is definitely a neologism, has the effect of deflecting Srila Prabhupada's criticism away from statements that would otherwise be its target.<sup>17</sup>

For example, Srila Prabhupada criticizes "getting married between man to man." Some could say that Prabhupada protested gay marriage, not gay monogamy. But manifest in marriage and monogamy is the desire for approval. Srila Prabhupada not only condemns "gay marriage" but also condemns the approval of homosexuality, with or without marriage—"Now the priestly order supporting homosex." The newness and unfamiliarity of the term "gay monogamy" has the effect of distracting the reader from the substance of Srila Prabhupada's protest.

The effect of using awkward terms such as "mutually consensual homosexuality," "straight-forward homosexuality," "bi-sexuality," and especially the unfamiliar "gay monogamy" has been to get around Srila Prabhupada's explicit objection to the approval of homosexuality.

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<sup>16</sup> Prabhupada, "Conversation with the GBC -- Los Angeles," 25 May 1972.

<sup>17</sup> A Google search for the term "gay marriage" (in quotes) returns 8,580,000 entries, but a search for "gay monogamy" returns only 1,510 entries. The Gay Monogamy page at Dipika.org is ranked third in the "gay monogamy" search result.

## ***Difference in Audience***

Goswami appears to be concerned with the fact that Srila Prabhupada consistently proscribes homosexuality but that the Bhagavatam commentaries of other previous acharyas contain no explicit, unambiguous statements about it.

Goswami begins his analysis of gender irregularities in the Bhagavatam by first stating “that we must understand the spiritual science through guru, sadhu, and shastra, ‘one’s teacher, other saintly persons, and revealed scriptures.’”<sup>18</sup> He then analyzes the Sanskrit verses in the Bhagavatam (3.20.23 – 37)<sup>19</sup> and concludes that these verses do not explicitly mention homosexuality. He even notes that the word “homosexuality” itself does not at all appear in the Bhagavatam. Goswami next refers to the Bhagavatam commentaries of Sridhara Swami, Vira Raghavacharya, and Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, which he says all describe the demons as “lusting after women” but never once describes their behavior as homosexual.

He seems to think this difference between Srila Prabhupada on the one hand and the shastra and the acharyas on the other hand is important. That might explain why after referring to the criteria of guru, sadhu, and shastra he makes this statement:

“Srila Prabhupada also taught unceasingly that his own ultimate qualification, and indeed the qualification of any bona fide guru, is to always faithfully repeat the teachings of Krishna as they are found in revealed scriptures.”

Could we believe that this is a case of Srila Prabhupada not faithfully repeating “the teachings of Krishna as they are found in revealed scriptures”?

If among other acharyas Srila Prabhupada’s statements about homosexuality are unique, then it could be said that Srila Prabhupada had merely expressed an *opinion* on the matter and did not represent the unambiguous authority of the parampara. After all, even among the Vaisnava acharyas there are sometimes differences of opinion on matters of shastra, and those differences at the very least give us a choice.

Taking Srila Prabhupada’s statement as an opinion also opens up the possibility for us to have our own, differing opinions. Even in matters of shastra, having opinions that differ from Srila Prabhupada’s would not necessarily be inappropriate for his spiritual descendants. Yet the possibility still leaves us the burden of showing that Srila Prabhupada had indeed expressed an opinion.

Demonstrating this is not as simple as pointing out that he said something no other previous acharya had said. Indeed, all other previous acharyas addressed their commentaries to audiences that were well steeped in Vedic culture, and Srila Prabhupada addressed his commentary to an audience that had little if any knowledge of Vedic culture. This difference in audience is important.

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<sup>18</sup> Goswami, “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality,” 18

<sup>19</sup> Srila Prabhupada in his commentary on these verses said that the homosexual appetite was created along with Brahma’s creation of the demons.

Some things that previous acharyas took for granted with their audiences Srila Prabhupada would have had to explain at length. It is highly unlikely that Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura would have had to say to the people of his time that homosexuality is “not for any sane male.” On account of his modern, Western audience, the same cannot be said of Srila Prabhupada. Because of this difference in audience, any of Srila Prabhupada’s statements could be unique among those of the previous acharyas yet still represent the conclusion of the parampara.

## **Quoting Srila Prabhupada Out of Context**

Goswami concluded his analysis of homosexuality and the Bhagavatam by saying that none of the sources he examines “explicitly describe or proscribe” homosexuality.<sup>20</sup> Up to this point, Goswami has presented a case for the absence of homosexuality from shastra and the previous acharyas. But what about “guru”? Goswami’s standard for selection was limited to “specific, explicit, unambiguous scriptural statements about homosexuality” that either described or proscribed homosexuality.<sup>21</sup>

This standard is important, because it allows Goswami to disregard a particularly direct statement from Srila Prabhupada. He partially quotes Srila Prabhupada’s purport to SB 3.20.26, a two-sentence purport, and by itself the one sentence he selected stands outside of his criteria. The sentence that he quotes—“It appears here that the homosexual appetite of males for each other is created in this episode of the creation of the demons by Brahma.”—neither *describes* nor *proscribes* homosexuality. By itself this sentence seems to refer only to *its creation*.

But the sentence he does not quote, when taken together with the sentence he has quoted, *strongly proscribes* homosexuality and therefore invalidates his conclusion (excluded portion bolded):

“It appears here that the homosexual appetite of males for each other is created in this episode of the creation of the demons by Brahma. **In other words, the homosexual appetite of a man for another man is demoniac and is not for any sane male in the ordinary course of life.**”

If Goswami had found a similar set of explicit statements proscribing homosexuality in just one of the commentaries of the other acharyas he referred to, would he have concluded that there are no “specific, explicit, unambiguous scriptural statements about homosexuality” that either describes or proscribes it? If the triad of guru, sadhu, and shastra was really the basis of his analysis, then why in his analysis is the *absence* of such statements from *sadhu* significant but the *presence* of such statements from *guru* insignificant?

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<sup>20</sup> Goswami, “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality,” 21.

<sup>21</sup> Goswami, “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality,” 22

## **Conclusion**

At odds with the excellent presentation of Vaisnava ethics in the first half of Goswami's essay is the absence of a representative sample Srila Prabhupada's own consistently stated views on homosexuality. This is accompanied by an interpretive approach that has the effect of keeping his views at a distance. Because there is much in Srila Prabhupada's books about Vedic culture that among the works of other acharyas is unique, this interpretive approach is likely to relegate much of that material to the realm of subjective opinion. The more subjective Srila Prabhupada's authority is considered, the more it will be felt that an interpretive approach like Goswami's is needed.

If the uniqueness of Srila Prabhupada's presentation of Krishna consciousness was not so much conjecture as it was fulfilling the need to address a very different audience, then greater subjectivity ascribed to Srila Prabhupada's views would likely reflect a drift from the parampara. Nevertheless, as regards to understanding dharma, the first part of Goswami's essay suggests that devotees should probably think more about consequences than they may be accustomed to. On this account, Goswami has a legitimate point.

In application, however, Goswami's interpretive approach has also been excessive. His notion of the "ideal" versus "real" as he has applied it to the conception of illicit sex directly conflicts with an "as it is" reading, which also covers the case of struggling devotees. Like his recommendation for gay monogamy, his conception of illicit sex is radically at odds with Srila Prabhupada's consistently stated views. The starkness of this difference strongly suggests that there is in progress a significant drift from the parampara. If left unchecked, this drift will have serious consequences for ISKCON.

One of the first casualties of this drift will be the GBC's authority. Goswami's statement about illicit sex and what Srila Prabhupada taught about it is incompatible with the GBC's statement of the same four years earlier. In his essay, which was a defense of his statement on appropriateness of gay monogamy, Goswami wrote the following:

The real situation in ISKCON is that many, many householders follow the easier, less ideal version of the rule: no sex outside of marriage. Prabhupada himself at times taught both the ideal and, for many, the "real" version of this rule, the version they can actually follow.

But before that the GBC had officially made quite a different statement:

it is resolved THAT: the GBC Body wishes to clarify that according to Srila Prabhupada's teachings, sex life according to religious principles followed by Gaudiya Vaisnavas is for the propagation of children, not for any other purpose. . .

It has now been two years since Goswami has made his statement to the contrary, and the GBC has offered no defense of its former statement. If the GBC continues to neglect its defense, then that sends a strong signal to the rest of ISKCON's members that the GBC either cannot defend it or will not defend it. If the GBC cannot defend it, then devotees will increasingly look elsewhere for spiritual guidance. If the GBC will not defend it, then devotees will also begin to look elsewhere for spiritual guidance but perhaps a little more quickly.

Continued absence of an intellectual response on the GBC's part will seriously undermine ISKCON's unity. The core of ISKCON's society is comprised of devotees who are concerned with devotion and philosophy. They are united on account of a common understanding of Krishna consciousness. The GBC's authority therefore rests very much on maintaining that common understanding and meeting all challenges to it as they arise. Of course, at the level of details there is room for difference among devotees. But illicit sex is not a detail; up until now we have called the "no illicit sex" rule a *regulative principle*. If left alone to grow, differences in understanding our most fundamental principles will eventually split ISKCON's members—deeply, bitterly, and irrevocably.

Major "unity disruptions"—better known as "schisms"—often take generations to unfold. The reason schisms can take so long to manifest is that older people are much less susceptible to changes in their patterns of thinking than younger people. People's beliefs and patterns of thinking are generally *baselined* when they are young. For new ways of thinking to become accepted in society, new ideas usually have to "grow up" with the younger people who learn them.

In the same way, all of today's senior members of ISKCON "grew up" with pretty much only Srila Prabhupada's books. Most will never agree that gay monogamy or having two versions of the no illicit sex rule are things Srila Prabhupada would have approved of. But what about that young bhakta who reads Srila Prabhupada's books and, as a companion to those books, reads a senior member of ISKCON's proposal that suggests Srila Prabhupada taught two versions of the "no illicit sex" rule and would have approved of gay monogamy? What will that young bhakta's baseline understanding of Krishna consciousness look like? How might generations after him develop that understanding and carry it to its logical conclusion?

Throughout history there have been many examples of religions that, over time, persistently shifted their baseline understanding of what they believed in and, as a consequence, came to the point of schism. In our time, the most immediate and outstanding example is the Anglican Communion—a world-wide group of churches affiliated with the Church of England.

Historically, Christianity has viewed the purpose of sex as being primarily for the sake of procreation, and Christians have consistently condemned contraception since the time of pre-Christian Rome. Up through 1908, the Anglican Communion was no exception. At the Lambeth conference of that year (their equivalent of our GBC meetings) their topmost bishops passed these resolutions:

The Conference regards with alarm the growing practice of the artificial restriction of the family, and earnestly calls upon all Christian people to discountenance the use of all artificial means of restriction as demoralising to character and hostile to national welfare.<sup>22</sup> The Conference affirms that deliberate tampering with nascent life is repugnant to Christian morality.<sup>23</sup>

At Lambeth twenty two years later, in 1930, the Communion passed a resolution that appreciably differed:

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<sup>22</sup> The Lambeth Conference, "Resolutions from 1908," Resolution 41, [Anglican Communion Office](http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1908/1908-41.cfm). 9 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1908/1908-41.cfm>>

<sup>23</sup> The Lambeth Conference, "Resolutions from 1908," Resolution 42, [Anglican Communion Office](http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1908/1908-42.cfm). 9 Jan 2007 <<http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1908/1908-42.cfm>>

Where there is clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, the method must be decided on Christian principles. The primary and obvious method is complete abstinence from intercourse (as far as may be necessary) in a life of discipline and self-control lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless in those cases where there is such a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the Conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of the same Christian principles. The Conference records its strong condemnation of the use of any methods of conception control from motives of selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience.<sup>24</sup>

For this resolution, the vote was 193 to 67, clearly a majority but certainly not unanimous. The hold-outs were more likely to have been older bishops who were around in 1908.

Twenty-eight years later, at the 1958 Lambeth conference, the Communion by that time had turned a full “about face” away from its historical Christian view of contraception:

The Conference believes that the responsibility for deciding upon the number and frequency of children has been laid by God upon the consciences of parents everywhere; that this planning, in such ways as are mutually acceptable to husband and wife in Christian conscience, is a right and important factor in Christian family life and should be the result of positive choice before God. Such responsible parenthood, built on obedience to all the duties of marriage, requires a wise stewardship of the resources and abilities of the family as well as a thoughtful consideration of the varying population needs and problems of society and the claims of future generations.<sup>25</sup>

Strong words like “deliberate tampering with nascent life,” of course, are no longer used. Rather, this statement employs fluffy euphemisms that are codes for the same. Later, the Communion in some of its world wide branches officially sanctioned abortion under terms similar to “positive choice before God.”

Shifts in their baseline understanding did not stop in 1958. In 2003, the Communion’s American branch, also known as the Episcopal Church, approved the ordination of a bishop who is in an open and active homosexual relationship. This same branch and some others, such as the church in Canada, have persisted in blessing same sex unions or even marrying people who are of the same sex. The Church of England itself is largely sympathetic to such practices. However, much of the rest of the member churches are not. Within the Communion, one side fiercely defends such practices and their underlying ideas while the other side vehemently protests them.

All this came about in large part because the professors in the Communion’s socially progressive seminaries proactively shifted the baseline understanding of the Communion’s core principles in the minds of their young seminary students. As some of these students themselves became professors, with each generation the cycle was repeated and the baseline understanding of religion in the minds of a substantial section of the Communion’s priests kept shifting.

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<sup>24</sup> The Lambeth Conference, “Resolutions from 1930,” Resolution 15, Anglican Communion Office. 10 Jan 2007 <<http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1930/1930-15.cfm>>

<sup>25</sup> The Lambeth Conference, “Resolutions from 1958,” Resolution 115, Anglican Communion Office. 10 Jan 2007 <<http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1958/1958-115.cfm>>



One lesson from the Anglican Communion is that the consequences of our actions, or the consequences of *inaction*, sometimes do not manifest until long after we have left our bodies. It took almost three generations for the Anglican Communion to completely change their view on contraception from absolute opposition to “positive choice before God.” And it took five generations, from 1908 to almost 2008, to come to the point where important constituencies of the Communion have declared the gay lifestyle fully compatible with Christian teaching. The result? The Communion is on the brink of an historic, world-wide schism. The appearance of Goswami’s essay, which presents ISKCON’s members world-wide a radically new baseline understanding of our own principles, and the GBC’s relative silence, strongly suggests that we may now be following a similar trajectory.

Another lesson from the Anglican slide into unbridled secularism is that passing resolutions did nothing to stop it. The resolutions passed only gave the appearance of doing something about it. The issue of gay monogamy in our society is not a managerial problem but an intellectual one, and that requires intellectual and spiritual leadership. A society that is founded on correct understanding cannot be held together by managerial maneuvers and a façade of unity.

Continuing to ignore the substance of Goswami’s essay and pretend that it makes no difference to ISKCON’s future is not likely to result in a happy outcome. Whether Goswami’s thesis is right or the devotees who oppose it are right, the incompatibility of their expressed views and important differences in their preferred ways of reading scripture are more likely to result in widespread dissension if not outright schism.

## Sex Life Srila Prabhupada Sanctioned

For his married disciples, did Srila Prabhupada sanction sex that was not meant for procreation? H.H. Hridayananda das Goswami says that he did. In an essay titled “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality,” Goswami made this statement:

The real situation in ISKCON is that many, many householders follow the easier, less ideal version of the rule: no sex outside of marriage. Prabhupada himself at times taught both the ideal and, for many, the “real” version of this rule, the version they can actually follow.<sup>26</sup>

Independently of his essay, which itself does not attempt to support this statement, Goswami has provided a number of Srila Prabhupada’s statements that he believes support the truth of his claim. These statements were received from Goswami through email. (*See Appendix for full list of references.*)

This collection of Srila Prabhupada’s statements is important. Goswami’s essay lacked a representative sample of Srila Prabhupada’s statements about homosexuality. But these statements can be considered a representative sample of what he believes to be Srila Prabhupada’s view of illicit sex. This collection presents us another important perspective on Goswami’s approach to interpreting the corpus of Srila Prabhupada’s works. With regard to the conclusion Goswami thinks these statements support, a closer examination of them suggests that he has adopted an interpretive approach that renders them less consistent with each other than does a more direct and traditional approach.

### **“What is Illicit Sex?”**

Some of the references Goswami quotes are from conversations Srila Prabhupada had with people who asked what he meant by “illicit sex” and were not his disciples:

Srila Prabhupada: Illicit sex is sex outside of marriage.<sup>27</sup>

Prabhupada: Illicit sex (is) without marriage, without any relation, sex life, that is illicit sex life. . . . So without marriage, sex life is illicit sex life.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Goswami, “Vaisnava Moral Theology and Homosexuality,” 10.

<sup>27</sup> Prabhupada, SSR 2a (Quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>28</sup> Prabhupada, Temple Press Conference (August 5, 1971) (Quoted by Goswami.)

In both conversations, the people inquiring are reporters who ask about ISKCON's requirements for initiation. The context of these references is about the qualifications for initiation.

Do Srila Prabhupada's responses provide a clear and distinct alternative to the better known "illicit sex," which is only for the sake of procreation? Not necessarily. When preaching, it is not always necessary that an answer be comprehensive or precise. If the reporters had been more serious about the subject of their inquiry, this is the kind of response they would have been more likely to receive:

And fourth, no illicit sex life, which means sex life only within marriage and then only for the purpose of procreating Krishna Conscious children.<sup>29</sup>

I am pleased to note that as of January 1st you have given up eating of meat, fish or eggs, as well as intoxicants and gambling. You have asked what is meant by illicit sex. . Sex should be used only in marriage for begetting nice children to raise in Krsna Consciousness. Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita that I am sex life performed according to religious principles. Sex life for any other purpose means illicit sex.<sup>30</sup>

This is the answer Srila Prabhupada persistently gave to those who were more serious about spiritual life. Like the responses to the reporters, these are also in response to questions about the requirements for initiation. But the two different types of inquirers differ in seriousness and purpose.

However, when speaking with others who had little if any interest in becoming his disciples, Srila Prabhupada sometimes also specified these requirements:

Reverend Powell: Thank you. I take it from what you've just been saying, Your Grace, that this explains what is said here in the..., referring to illicit sex as being anything that's not in marriage and not for procreation within marriage.

Prabhupada: Only, the sex allowed only for begetting nice children.

Reverend Powell: You don't feel that...

Prabhupada: And beyond that, sex, that is illicit sex.<sup>31</sup>

All that can be said of the statements Goswami quotes here is that Srila Prabhupada did not always comprehensively define illicit sex whenever he mentioned it.

## ***Sex and Marriage around the World***

The next class of statements appeals to a pan-civilizational conception of sex and marriage. In these references, which Goswami presents, Srila Prabhupada notes that every society has a rite of marriage and a social institution dedicated to it.

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<sup>29</sup> Prabhupada, Letter to: Elaine -- Mayapur 1 February, 1976 (Not quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>30</sup> Prabhupada, Letter to: Mr. Suresh Candra -- Mayapur 18 June, 1973 (Not quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>31</sup> Prabhupada, Room Conversation with Reverend Gordon Powell, Head of Scots Church -- June 28, 1974, Melbourne (Not quoted by Goswami.)

Therefore civilized human beings recognize that there is a difference between sex in marriage and sex outside of marriage, which is just like sex between animals.<sup>32</sup>

In every civilized society—it may be Hindu society or Muslim society or Christian society—any civilized human society, there is the system of marriage. And beyond marriage, if there is sex life, that is called illicit sex life. That is never indulged in any society. So what to speak of transcendental life?<sup>33</sup>

in the present age that is not possible. So in our method, Krsna consciousness, we don't say, "Stop sex." We say, "Don't have illicit sex." Of course, what to speak of transcendental life, giving up illicit sex is a requirement of civilized life. In every civilized society there is a system of marriage, and if there is sex outside of marriage, that is called illicit sex. That is never allowed for people in any civilized society, what to speak of those trying for transcendental life. Transcendental life must be purified of all mental and bodily concepts of self.<sup>34</sup>

These references provide a middle-ground between sex outside of marriage and the standard of sex once-a-month and only for procreation. In this middle ground, sex outside of marriage is widely regarded as illicit sex, and sex within marriage is regarded as permissible. But does this standard apply specifically to devotees who have taken initiation?

What is appropriate for a person in one status of life may be inappropriate for another. This is also true of pretty much all societies throughout the world. In the Western countries there is a tradition of celibacy. In that tradition, nuns, monks, and a number of priests have historically remained celibate. Buddhist countries, too, have a class of people (monks, nuns, lamas) who refrain from sex. While the conception of celibacy within these civilizations is typically total abstinence, the conception of Godly life in pretty much every civilization is nevertheless characterized by sense control.

As regards to sense control, Vedic civilization is a little different from other civilizations in that it has a conception of married life that is distinctly more elevated than conventional married life. In Vedic civilization, religious householder life is characterized by a higher degree of sense control than is often found in other civilizations. On this point of sense control, Srila Prabhupada distinguishes the grihastha from the grihamedhi:

So that is regulated, that you must have wife. Not must have, but if you cannot avoid, take one wife and remain as a grhastha. And there are so many rules and regulations of grhastha life. Grhastha life is not that "Whenever I like, we have sex." No, that is not. There is regulated. Once in a month. When there is menstruation, and if the wife is pregnant -- then no more sex life. There are so many rules and regulations. Grhastha means one who follows the rules and regulation of sex life. That is grhastha. Not that simply united, man and woman, and live like animals. No, that is not grhastha. That is called grhamedhi.<sup>35</sup>

Here Srila Prabhupada criticizes unrestricted sex that is *within* marriage. If Goswami's original statement about Srila Prabhupada allowing householders some concession for sex only within marriage were directed to people in general, then Goswami's statement would have been fine. However, it was specifically directed to ISKCON's householders, so the references quoted by him in this section do not support his statement.

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<sup>32</sup> Prabhupada, Journey of Self-Discovery 3.2 (Quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>33</sup> Prabhupada, Northeastern U. lecture, April 30, 1969 (Quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>34</sup> Prabhupada, Journey of Self-Discovery 5.1 (Quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>35</sup> Prabhupada, Lecture, Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.5.8 -- Vrndavana, October 30, 1976 (Not quoted by Goswami.)

## ***Omitted Does Not Mean Unimplied***

The last kind of references Goswami provides is from a more formal context, Srila Prabhupada's books and lectures.

He should not indulge in sex outside of married life, for sex is sanctioned in the scripture only in marriage, not otherwise. This is called celibacy.<sup>36</sup>

Sex life should be restricted to persons who are married. A person whose sex life is restricted in marriage is also called a brahmacari.<sup>37</sup>

So the marriage, sex life by marriage, is religious, and sex life without marriage, that is irreligious. So here Krsna says that "Sex life," dharmaviruddhah, "which is not against religious principle, that is I am."<sup>38</sup>

Legal is married life sex. That is taken as legal. And without marriage, like cats and dogs in the street or here and there, that is illegal.<sup>39</sup>

That these statements do not mention rules other than limiting sex to marriage does not mean that other rules do not also apply. As an example, consider the many statements Srila Prabhupada makes about chanting Hare Krishna but does not mention the offenses to be avoided. That Srila Prabhupada in most cases does not mention the offenses to be avoided when chanting Hare Krishna does not mean they are not implied.<sup>40</sup> In general, these other rules are implied even though not mentioned. As regards to what constitutes permissible sex, the omission of the other rules similarly does not mean they are not implied.

## ***Direct Statements versus Indirect Statements***

A direct statement is generally more authoritative than an indirect statement. None of the references Goswami provides directly describe a lesser but acceptable standard of sex for initiated devotees—the “real” version of the no-illicit-sex rule. There are, however, plenty of statements that indicate otherwise.

Then as far as dama (self-control) is concerned, it is not only meant for other orders of religious society, but is especially meant for the householder. Although he has a wife, a householder should not use his senses for sex life unnecessarily. There are restrictions for the householders even in sex life, which should only be engaged in for the propagation of children.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Prabhupada, BG 17.14 purport (Quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>37</sup> Prabhupada, SB 3.28.4 purport (Quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>38</sup> Prabhupada, BG Class 7.8-14, NY, Oct. 2, 1966 (Quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>39</sup> Prabhupada, SB Class 5.5.16, Vrindaban, November 4, 1976 (Quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>40</sup> Using the Bhaktivedanta Vedabase (version 4.11f), a boolean query of “chant” AND “hare krsna” returns 2909 entries. A boolean query of “chant” AND “hare krsna” AND “offenses” returns 99 entries.

<sup>41</sup> Prabhupada, Bg 16.1-3 (Not quoted by Goswami.)

Even in your life, married life, if you indulge sex life more than once in a month, or in pregnancy, that is against religious principles.<sup>42</sup>

If he marries, then grhastha. That is also tapasya. He cannot have sex life whenever he likes. No. The sastra says, "You must have sex life like this: once in a month and only for begetting children." So that is also tapasya.<sup>43</sup>

Guest (1): What do you consider illicit sex?

Prabhupada: Illicit sex means animal life. The marriage is in the human society, not in the dog society. So if one has illicit sex, that means he is no better than dog.

Guest (2): I don't quite understand that. Did you say that illicit means sex between people who are not married?

Prabhupada: Yes. Sex is allowed only married couple. And that is also only for begetting child.<sup>44</sup>

There are many, many more such statements in Srila Prabhupada's published works. If Srila Prabhupada had truly taught his disciples that sex within marriage but without regard for the other rules qualifies as a lesser but acceptable standard, then there should exist a statement that is as explicit as the ones above. This does not mean that such a statement does not exist. However, Goswami has yet to present it.

The most striking fact against the notion that Srila Prabhupada taught a lesser but acceptable standard for religious (legal) sex is that, on inquiry, he frequently enough presented the "ideal version" even to people who were not likely to become devotees. This includes people who were journalists, Christian priests, and health care professionals among others. Furthermore, the lack of a direct statement from Srila Prabhupada that supports the "real version" (the proposed lesser standard) and an abundance of direct statements to the contrary adds to the certainty that Srila Prabhupada taught his disciples one standard for legitimate sex, not two.

## **Conclusion**

Relative to the older way of reading Srila Prabhupada, Goswami's approach substantially lacks what can be considered an economy of understanding. This is a measure by which almost every theory is tested against other theories. For example, Copernicus's heliocentric theory for the movement of heavenly bodies superseded Ptolemy's theory of epicycles. Not only was the heliocentric theory more efficient, it explained phenomena Ptolemy's theory could not explain. Similarly, in evaluating two different interpretive approaches toward a particular body of statements, we would expect the better approach to exhibit a greater degree of consistency and explanation than would the inferior approach.

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<sup>42</sup> Prabhupada, Lecture Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.1.11 -- New York, July 25, 1971 (Not quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>43</sup> Prabhupada, Answers to a Questionnaire from Bhavan's Journal -- June 28, 1976, Vrndavana (Not quoted by Goswami.)

<sup>44</sup> Prabhupada, Room Conversation with Alcohol and Drug Hospital People -- May 16, 1975, Perth (Not quoted by Goswami.)

These criteria can be productively applied in a comparison of differing interpretive approaches to Srila Prabhupada's statements. The more traditional way reading of Srila Prabhupada (the way devotees within ISKCON have been generally accustomed to) arrives at an understanding that more efficiently unites the different statements presented here and achieves a greater degree of consistency. Under Goswami's approach, however, Srila Prabhupada's statements become more equivocal. They are more inconsistent with one another. They lack a degree of clarity and unity that the more traditional interpretation affords. It appears that Goswami's approach is necessary in order to lend legitimacy to notions like gay monogamy, which the more traditional yet clearer reading of Srila Prabhupada's statements would never do.

## Appendix

H.H. Hridayananda Goswami supplied the author of this essay this full list of references. These references were received via email on 4 November 2005.

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He should not indulge in sex outside of married life, for sex is sanctioned in the scripture only in marriage, not otherwise. This is called celibacy.

- BG 17.14 purport

Sex life should be restricted to persons who are married. A person whose sex life is restricted in marriage is also called a brahmacari.

- SB 3.28.4 purport

This Vedic social organization is very good in that it stops the promulgation of illicit sex life, or varṇa-saṅkara, which appears under different names in this present day. Unfortunately in this age although the father and mother are anxious to get their children married, the children refuse to get married by the arrangement of the parents. Consequently, the number of varṇa-saṅkara has increased throughout the world under different names.

- SB 4.27.8 purport

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Illicit sex is sex outside of marriage.

- Science of Self-Realization 2a

Therefore civilized human beings recognize that there is a difference between sex in marriage and sex outside of marriage, which is just like sex between animals.

- Journey of Self-Discovery 3.2



But in the present age that is not possible. So in our method, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we don't say, "Stop sex." We say, "Don't have illicit sex." Of course, what to speak of transcendental life, giving up illicit sex is a requirement of civilized life. In every civilized society there is a system of marriage, and if there is sex outside of marriage, that is called illicit sex. That is never allowed for people in any civilized society, what to speak of those trying for transcendental life. Transcendental life must be purified of all mental and bodily concepts of self.

- Journey of Self-Discovery 5.1

If one of our members wants to have sex, he or she can get married, but sex outside marriage is strictly forbidden.

- Dharma, The Way of Transcendence 11

So the marriage, sex life by marriage, is religious, and sex life without marriage, that is irreligious. So here Kṛṣṇa says that "Sex life," dharmāviruddhaḥ, "which is not against religious principle, that is I am.

- BG Class (7.8-14, NY, Oct. 2, 1966)

Now, so far Kṛṣṇa has described Himself, that any good thing... Just like sex life in marriage is a good.

- BG Class (7.8-14, NY, Oct. 2, 1966)

Similarly, marriage. Marriage—what is the meaning of marriage? Everyone can have sex without marriage. So what it means, marriage? Marriage means restriction. That's all. That you have sex, but a particular selected woman, man. That's... No more. That's all. That is marriage.

- SB Class (2.3.9, LA, May 26, 1972).

So even the śāstra gives him the facility, the facility is restricted. As much as marriage. What is the difference between married sex and without wife? Restricted. You restrict to one woman.

- SB Class (2.9.9, Tokyo, April 25, 1972)

Just like slaughterhouse. Slaughterhouse is not open to the public. It is done in a secret place so that people may not see. It is ghastly. So anything bad, that is licensed, licensed. Just like sex life. Sex life is also not very good thing. Therefore, the license is marriage. If you want to enjoy sex life, all right, take this license, marriage, not beyond that. Then you will be criminal.

- SB Class (4.14.14, Tokyo, November 16, 1971)

You want sex life, why don't you live, husband and wife, married? Sex life is not denied, but not outside the marriage. That is denied.

- SB Class (5.5.1-2, Stockholm, September 7, 1973)

Legal is married life sex. That is taken as legal. And without marriage, like cats and dogs in the street or here and there, that is illegal.

- SB Class (5.5.16, Vrindaban, November 4, 1976)

In every civilized society—it may be Hindu society or Muslim society or Christian society—any civilized human society, there is the system of marriage. And beyond marriage, if there is sex life, that is called illicit sex life. That is never indulged in any society. So what to speak of transcendental life?

- Northeastern U. lecture, April 30, 1969

We are asking our students four principles, four regulative principles. No illicit sex life. Beyond marriage life, there is no sex.

- University Lecture (Calcutta, January 29, 1973)

Prabhupāda: Illicit sex (is) without marriage, without any relation, sex life, that is illicit sex life.

Woman Interviewer: So sex is allowed in marriage, but not outside.

Prabhupāda: That is animal sex life. Just as animals, they have no relationship and have sex life. But human society there is restriction. In every country, in every religion there is a system of marriage. So without marriage, sex life is illicit sex life.

Woman Interviewer: But sex is allowed within marriage.

Prabhupāda: Yes, that is...

- Temple Press Conference (August 5, 1971)

From the very beginning, they are trained to refrain from the following four principles of degradation: 1) sex life outside marriage, 2) intoxication, 3) meat eating, and 4) gambling and idle sports. Our teaching are based on the authorized movement of Lord Caitanya, the teaching of the Bhagavad-gita as the beginning, and the teaching of Srimad-Bhagavatam as the graduate study.

- Letter to Archbishop of Canterbury, LA 1969

ISKCON is creating men of character. Students are required to follow strictly the regulative principles of Vedic life: 1) No illicit sex-life (i.e. outside of marriage); 2) No intoxicants, including coffee, tea, cigarettes, drugs; 3) No gambling; 4) Vegetarian diet.

- Letter to Life Member, April 5, 1972

We do not allow anyone become a preacher unless he is strictly following the Vaisnava principles of no eating meat, fish, or eggs; no sex outside of marriage; no gambling; and no taking any kind of intoxication whatsoever. You must also chant 16 rounds Hare Krishna on the japa beads.

- Letter to S. N. Sharma, Vrindavan, September 18, 1974