

## Why I am leaving ISKCON

By Caitanya dasa

Dear devotees,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

As you may have guessed from the title, I have finally come to that point that I always felt I would eventually come to- leaving the ISKCON institution. In case you are wondering, I am the same "Caitanya dasa" that used to maintain a blog titled "Hare Krishna Diary, Sankirtan Diary", which unintentionally created a large controversy (<http://www.dandavats.com/?p=5872>) last year in May 2008 by some of my writings which appeared on that blog.

I would like to explain a few of the reasons I have decided to leave ISKCON. I will first explain the social, cultural, and personal reasons, and then lastly I will explain the spiritual reasons.

The first reason is a philosophical reason. As many of you are aware, last year in 2008, the GBC tried to pass a resolution (GBC Resolution 311) to add footnotes or annotations into Srila Prabhupada's books, effectively changing the meaning behind many of Srila Prabhupada's purports. Most devotees felt that the GBC was minimizing or rejecting Srila Prabhupada's authority by doing this, and it was met with such a large public outcry that the GBC very quickly rescinded the 311 Resolution to change Srila Prabhupada's books. I was the creator of a petition to rescind the resolution, and the response was enormous. The petition received over 800 signatures within only two weeks. Here is a link to the petition, <http://www.petitiononline.com/GBCre311/petition.html>

Please read some of the comments written by devotees on the petition. Many devotees were very, very angry and upset by the GBC's decision to change Srila Prabhupada's books, and many of them threatened to leave ISKCON if the GBC dared to change Srila Prabhupada's divine books.

The next reason is a cultural one. About two months ago, Hridayananda Maharaja gave his public blessings and support to a homosexual male devotee couple to get married ([http://chakra.org/announcements/persFeb01\\_09.html](http://chakra.org/announcements/persFeb01_09.html)). I found this to be so completely absurd that I could not believe it at first. That Hridayananda Maharaja could even think something like this calls into question his very qualification to act as a spiritual master. Srila Prabhupada never, ever supported anything like this, and he never encouraged homosexuality or gay marriage. Hridayananda Maharaja has been publicly supporting the idea of gay marriage/monogamy for the past few years. The GBC has of yet made no public condemnation of Hridayananda Maharaja for this (Hridayananda Maharaja is also a GBC, in case you didn't know), and thus I come to the conclusion that the GBC supports such ideas as gay marriage. Silence means consent.

The next reason is a philosophical/organizational reason. Many devotees have a problem with the current authority structure in ISKCON. In short, we believe that ISKCON's culture of absolute control and blind following is not conducive to spiritual advancement. I will give an explicit personal example of this.

One of my first bhakta leaders was a follower of this tyrannical policy of "just surrender", absolute control, and blind following. We were simply supposed to follow his every order, no matter how absurd, and if we didn't, we would get severely chastised for being an "independent demon", "anti-authority", etc. On a few occasions, he even threatened to inflict physical violence on me if I didn't "surrender to his authority".

Even though at that point, any sane or rational person would have called the police, being a blind, naïve, and “surrendered” bhakta, I continued to blindly accept and follow his authority. Sometimes though, I would become so frustrated that I would become almost suicidal, telling myself “I would rather die than remain a part of this ISKCON”. I feel that one of the reasons that ISKCON cannot attract normal and intelligent people to join this movement is due to this culture of blindly following authority, no matter how wrong or abusive the authority happens to be.

The next reason is a social/cultural reason. I see the degrading influence of feminism (aka “women’s liberation” or “equal rights”) to be increasing within ISKCON. The “ISKCON Women’s Ministry” has been promoting feminist policies for over a decade now. Aside from being a very socially destructive policy, feminism is clearly against Srila Prabhupada’s teachings. Simply search for “equal rights” in the Vedabase and you can see for yourself how strongly Srila Prabhupada was against the idea of “equal rights”. Those devotees who are promoting feminism are actually rejecting Srila Prabhupada’s teachings. It is also an interesting observation to note that most of the people promoting and supporting feminism are western devotees- thus suggesting that the source of this problem is their own western conditioning. Generally, you never see Indian devotees promoting feminism.

The latest manifestation of feminism in ISKCON is the GBC’s latest decision to acknowledge and even accept the idea of “female diksa gurus”, something which Srila Prabhupada himself never established (this idea would also be unthinkable to anyone coming from a traditional Vedic background). I will not get into a lengthy discussion on this issue of feminism at present, because that is not the intention of this letter to do so. I will simply request you to read a few links that I feel strongly prove that ISKCON is indeed being contaminated by feminism.

Feminists Want to Change Prabhupada's Books

<http://www.vnn.org/world/WD9905/WD03-3779.html>

Feminists Openly blasphemy Srila Prabhupada

<http://www.vnn.org/editorials/ET9912/ET06-5033.html>

Srila Prabhupada was blasphemed, and the GBC remained silent

<http://rails.bharatavarsa.net/articles/show/7337>

Feminist Theories and their Effect on ISKCON

<http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/05-08/editorials2928.htm>

Feminists violently Disrupt the Vrindavan Kartik Festival

<http://www.vnn.org/world/WD9912/WD09-5048.html>

A Philosophical Refutation of ISKCON GBC's 2000 "Women in ISKCON" Resolution

<http://iskconjiva.blogspot.com/>

Notes from a Think Tank (a very detailed exposition of feminism)

<http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/05-08/nfft.doc>

Madhusudani Radha (Maria Eckstrand), Editor of [Chakra.org](http://www.chakra.org) blasphemies Lord Rama

<http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/05-08/madhusudani.doc>

Debate about feminism in ISKCON on [Dandavats.com](http://www.dandavats.com)

<http://www.dandavats.com/?p=2232#comment-1476>

Another reason that I have chosen to disassociate myself from the ISKCON institution is because I, and many others, feel that ISKCON has become compromised, or "watered down", from following Srila Prabhupada's teachings purely and strictly. I will give one such example out of the many "compromises" and deviations in ISKCON. Remember the "Govinda's Movie Theater" in Sydney, Australia? ([www.govindas.com.au](http://www.govindas.com.au)) It is run by a couple of Prabhupada disciples. They were showing a movie called "Sex in the City" at the Govinda's Movie

*Theater. It isn't very difficult to realize that it is probably NOT very pleasing to Srila Prabhupada to show such pornography at an ISKCON center (the Govinda's Movie Theater address is listed in the ISKCON.com website directory- <http://iskcon.com/worldwide/centres/australasia.html>).*

*One particularly disturbing trend in ISKCON, and which is also supported and encouraged by the leadership, is the acceptance of western education, especially secular university education. A few prominent sannyasi leaders have gone to secular universities, even though Srila Prabhupada very strongly called the modern academic institutions "slaughterhouses". In many ways, ISKCON has become so watered down that you can't even quote a statement from Srila Prabhupada without someone freaking out. As the previous examples illustrate (feminism, GBC changing Srila Prabhupada's books, homosexuality and gay marriage), even the ISKCON leadership, the GBC, encourage and support these deviations. The mood of strictly following Srila Prabhupada "as it is" has been lost to a great degree. Instead of following Srila Prabhupada absolutely, "as it is", many devotees simply follow what they want to follow, and they reject whatever they don't want to follow. What it actually comes down to is a lack of faith in Srila Prabhupada's absolute purity and position. I find such an offensive and disrespectful attitude towards Srila Prabhupada too hard to tolerate, and thus I have no choice but to simply remove myself from an organization that tolerates such an offensive attitude. If you love somebody, it is very difficult to tolerate blasphemy of them.*

*Of course, there are some noble devotees within ISKCON who are trying to defend Srila Prabhupada and his teachings from this attitude of compromise, but after long consideration, I feel that in the long run, they won't be successful maintaining Srila Prabhupada's pure teachings and standards within the ISKCON institution. After all, history shows that once something degrades, it is extremely difficult to bring it back up to its original pure position.*

*Finally, the real reason, main reason, that I am leaving ISKCON is for spiritual reasons. This human lifetime is simply too short to waste being absorbed in*

*political or institutional affairs, rather than in Krishna consciousness. When I really think about it, I honestly do not feel that I have made much real advancement in Krishna consciousness. How much attraction have I actually developed for Krishna? How much love or affection have I actually developed for Krishna? Sometimes I feel that instead of developing Krishna consciousness, I have been cultivating political or institutional consciousness. And I simply cannot bear to waste any more time in that direction. Krishna is so beautiful and sweet that I am bewildered as to how I could have wasted even a moment absorbed in mundane political/institutional affairs.*

*This human life is so short- I am only 24 years old, and I could die in 40 years, or in 4 years, or in 4 days, or even in 4 minutes. And at the end of my life, will I want to experience the great disappointment of having missed attaining Krishna and His association simply because I have wasted so much time being absorbed in political/institutional consciousness instead of Krishna consciousness? The only thing that matters at the time of death is how much Krishna consciousness we have developed.*

*When I look at myself, I do not feel that I have developed any real Vaisnava qualities. Instead of developing compassion, I have developed bitterness and anger. Instead of developing love, I have developed envy and hate. Instead of developing humility, I have developed pride and intolerance. Narottama dasa Thakura's famous words of humility actually apply to me:*

*Ki mora duhkhera katha, janama gonainu vrtha*

*Dhik dhik narottama dasa*

*"This is the sad story of my life. I have spent my life uselessly absorbed in distressful topics. What a shameless life I, Narottama dasa, have led."*

*I do not want to waste my human form of life. I desperately want to become a humble, sincere, and serious Vaisnava. In my own case, I feel that remaining a member of ISKCON will not be conducive towards that goal.*

*Many devotees both inside and outside of ISKCON feel that ISKCON is seriously lacking in care and compassion- towards it's own members and towards the society at large. There is such a great pressure put on making new members, collecting money, building temples, that if we are not careful, we may even miss the entire point- which is to develop love for Krishna. Ultimately, bhakti means love- love for others and love for Krishna.*

*Basically, I do not feel that my spiritual desires are going to be fulfilled in ISKCON. So it is because of this main reason, as well as the other above stated reasons, that I can no longer conscientiously consider myself to be a member of the ISKCON institution.*

*I will be maintaining a small blog where I will share my own personal realizations and how my spiritual life is going: <http://harekrishnadiary.blogspot.com/>*

*I will end with a prayer:*

*Vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca Krpa-sindhubhya eva ca*

*Patitanam pavanebhyo Vaisnavebhyo namo namah*

*das,*

*Caitanya dasa*