

Response to Sanaka Rsi Dasa

By **Bhakti Vikasa Swami**

Dear Sanaka Rsi Prabhu,

Asirvada. Jaya Srila Prabhupada!

Thankyou for your polite and thoughtful **letter**. The issues the CPO (ISKCON's Child Protection Office) deals with are indeed very serious. I appreciate the CPO's effort in highlighting the issues and working towards finding solutions for protecting our children. In your letter, you highlight three main issues: The conduct of certain senior members of our society; socially acceptable conduct in the current era; and use of fear as an instrument of discipline.

Your case largely rests on the assumption that the CPO is highly trustworthy, makes no mistakes, and has no bias or political agenda. A different picture of the CPO appears in at least two articles (posted on this website, Sampradaya Sun), which I urge readers of this letter to peruse.[\[i\]](#)

I certainly agree that everyone, especially sannyasis, should be extremely careful in dealing with women and children. It is good to be vigilant, as you are, to highlight serious errors so that they may be rectified.

Among materialistic people, what is considered to be socially acceptable conduct is not fixed; it changes in time. For example, in the modern era abortion is considered socially acceptable whereas a few decades back, even in Western society, it was unacceptable. And divorce is largely acceptable within ISKCON today although previously it was not. As far as possible, we should follow Vedic tradition and not flap in the ever-changing wind of materialistic speculations. Presently, rigid disciplining of children is largely disfavored in the West. Here is one of Srila Prabhupada's quotes in this regard:

When child is sixteen years old he can do as he likes, not before that.

lalayet panca varsani

dasa varsani tadayet

prapte tu sodase varse

putram mitravad acaret

This is the moral instruction of Canakya Pandita. Up to five years, don't chastise, don't take any action. Let him be free. Whatever he likes, he can do. Then after fifth year, for ten years you must be very strict. Then five years and ten years, fifteen. And when he is sixteen years, treat him like a friend. *Prapte tu sodase varse putram mitravad acaret*. At that time, no stricture that he will break. "My dear boy, if you do this..." This is necessary. And from fifth year to fifteenth year you should chastise the sons and disciples just like tiger. After five years. (April 5, 1977, Bombay)

You wrote: "If you read his entire case files, you will find that BVPM has been personally investigated and sanctioned by the authorities several times. The first major investigation took place

in 1990, the second in 1998, the third in 2007 and the last one in 2015. Each one of these investigations brought to light the negligent, inappropriate and abusive behaviour towards the children placed under his care.”

On your site there are no case files for 1990 and 2015 regarding BVPM, which could be seen as abusive on your part; if you make severe allegations, you should provide evidence.

The 2007 case file included many letters of appreciation. One parent asked to not throw out the baby with the bathwater, which is the crux of my position.

You quoted from my lecture, “Fear is good.” This is rather unfair, because what I actually said was, “A **little** fear is good.” One “little” word makes a big difference!

To explain by analogy: in any polity, fear of punishment is required to maintain law and order. Similarly, religions teach people to follow rules so as to be freed from punishment and not be cast into hell. Thus both state and religion invoke fear for the betterment of their wards.

Children should not be raised in an atmosphere of fear, but some fear is required. Children must learn the difference between right and wrong, and that there are consequences for doing wrong. Those who do not imbibe this are more liable to bring harm to themselves and others. For almost all children, some forceful teaching of this principle is needed.

A transcript of the lecture that you commented on is available [here](#) and others may go through it to better understand my position.

In Srila Prabhupada’s service

Bhakti Vikasa Swami

[i] Snake Oil, Scapegoats, and the Hare Krishnas: The CPO’s Use of Bogus Science (By: Visnugada Dasa, PhD in Clinical Psychology) <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/06-09/editorials4595.htm>

A Bad CPO Decision should be reversed (By: Dharini Devi Dasi)
<http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/06-09/editorials4635.htm>