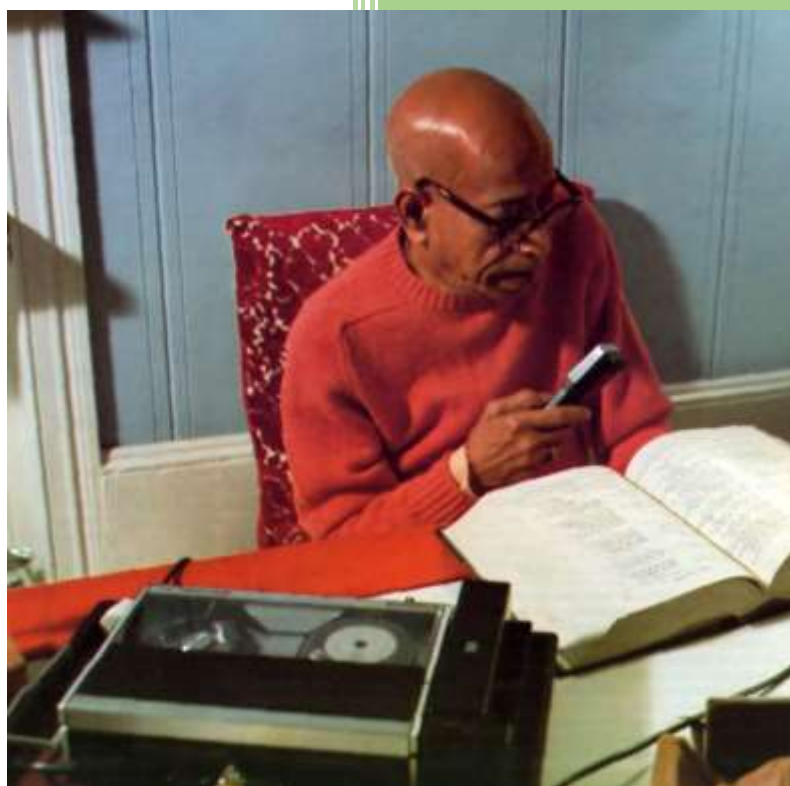


Did Śrīla Prabhupāda commit mistakes?



Śrīdhara Śrīnivāsa dāsa

ISKCON India Scholars Board

30 July 2023

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Executive Summary

Kaunteya Prabhu (JPS), former minister for ISKCON congregation development and co-ordinator for the ISKCON GBC Strategic planning team, recently circulated his new book, *Tough Questions, Difficult Answers on Srila Prabhupada's Contentious Remarks*. In this book, he categorically states in multiple places that some of the statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda are potentially erroneous or mistaken.

He has stated that whatever statements Śrīla Prabhupāda made that are not directly from *śāstra*, such as the logic that Śrīla Prabhupāda often used to explain his conclusions, should be verified and accepted with caution.

So, when Srila Prabhupada is presenting the “original text” we should take his words as perfect; when he is retelling something he heard from, say, his Christian professors at the Scottish Church College, we need to be cautious, and seek verification.—
[page 46]

Śrīla Prabhupāda always arrived at his conclusions based on *śāstra*; his statements that women are less intelligent, or that man cannot go to moon in his mortal body, etc., are all direct statements from Vedic scriptures or derived from the Vedic versions.

For example, the following statement from Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to SB 2.3.14 is indeed backed by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.4.25), as cited below:

...the epics or the histories of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, which are specifically recommended for the less intelligent classes (women, *śūdras* and unworthy sons of the higher castes), are also accepted as Vedic literature because they are compiled in connection with the activities of the Lord.—[SB 2.3.14 purport]

*strī-śūdra-dvijabandhūnām
trayī na śruti-gocarā
karma-śreyasi mūḍhānām
śreya evaṁ bhaved iha
iti bhāratam ākhyānaṁ
kṛpayā muninā kṛtam*

Out of compassion, the great sage thought it wise that this would enable men to achieve the ultimate goal of life. Thus he compiled the great historical narration called the *Mahābhārata* for women,

laborers and friends of the twice-born.—[SB 1.4.25 text and translation]

While explaining these conclusions to his audience Śrīla Prabhupāda often used logic or analogies, such as:

Sādhu, śāstra and guru, a spiritual master. Three parallel line. And if you place your car or vehicle on these three parallel line, your car will go direct to Kṛṣṇa. *Tinete kariyā aikya*.—[Lectures and Addresses, Oct. 18, 1968, Seattle]

Unlike the Buddhists, followers of Vedas and Vaiṣṇavas do not derive conclusions primarily from logic. In the example cited above, when Śrīla Prabhupāda says that *sādhu-śāstra-guru* are the three-parallel lines that takes one directly to Kṛṣṇa, one may use the example of comparing it to a three-tracked railway system. The conclusion is that we must align our thoughts, words, and actions with *sādhu-śāstra-guru* at all times in order to reach the destination of going back home, back to Kṛṣṇa.

The logic of using a three-track vehicle analogy is to help us understand the need to always maintain a perfect alignment between *sādhu-śāstra-guru vākya*s. The three-track vehicle analogy is merely logic, and one cannot use the logic to alter the conclusion. For example, one cannot derive a conclusion using the logic of two-tracked railway to state that *śāstra-guru vākya* alignment alone is sufficient.

However, throughout his book, Kaunteya derives his own conclusions and contradicts some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements, based on data gathered from modern scientific research and logic. He fails to understand that logic is only meaningful when it is used as a support for a conclusion.

For example, commenting on Śrīla Prabhupāda's logic that women's brains weigh less than men's brains being the reason for women being not equal to men and being less intelligent, Kaunteya says:

Besides, it's not a fact that a bigger brain necessarily indicates a finer intellect, although Srila Prabhupada's teachers had taught him so: "Our professor—he was a Scotsman—he explained . . . that the more brain substance is there, more one becomes intelligent." (Lecture on SB 1.3.21, Los Angeles, 26 Sept 1972) **This was plainly wrong.**—[page 406]

Śrīla Prabhupāda's conclusions are final and immutable, and they need to be accepted as they are without any alterations. While explaining these conclusions, Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted any argument that was favorable to the conclusions of *śāstra*, and discarded logical arguments or so-called scientific evidence that did not support it. If there are discrepancies in the logic that Śrīla

Prabhupāda used, we have to understand that it really does not matter because we have to accept Śrīla Prabhupāda's conclusions as they are, since they are based on *śāstra*.

But Kaunteya judges Śrīla Prabhupāda's conclusions based on the logic that Śrīla Prabhupāda used. For instance, Śrīla Prabhupāda's conclusions that woman are less intelligent is based on *śāstra*, but Kaunteya questions Śrīla Prabhupāda's conclusion solely based on the discrepancy in the logic of brain size, that Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes employed. In this way, Kaunteya fails to understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda's conclusions regarding women that are based on *śāstric* injunctions outweighs the accuracy of the data regarding a woman's brain size.

Kaunteya states in his book that certain statements or logic that Śrīla Prabhupāda used to support his conclusions are not to be considered transcendental:

Although pure in his understanding of sastra, while dialoguing on social matters he occasionally referenced sources that were neither absolute nor accurate (such as his college professors' views on the size of men's and women's brains), therefore some of his comments on certain material issues appear to have been affected by the relative cultural influences he had been exposed to.— [page 23]

But in this essay, on the basis of *śāstra-sādhu-guru-vākyas*, we conclude that a liberated soul's words and actions can never be classified as defective, because being self-realized or having attained the perfection of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, there can be no defects in one just as there can be no defects in Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the all-perfect Supreme Personality of Godhead. The actions performed by a self-realized soul and the actions performed by an ordinary soul are not on the same platform, as confirmed by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport to SB 3.15.31, cited below:

The difference is, however, that sense activities in liberation are accepted only in connection with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whereas sense activities in the conditioned stage are enacted for personal sense gratification.—[purport SB 3.15.31]

Hence, it is nothing but total absurdity to even consider the question of whether liberated souls such as Śrīla Prabhupāda can commit mistakes or that their actions come under the four defects of a conditioned soul. This is because a liberated soul, or a fully Kṛṣṇa conscious person, always utilizes his free will to dedicate his *kāya-vāca-manasa* (body-mind-words) voluntarily and fully to be

engaged in the devotional service of the Lord at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances.¹

Accusations against Śrīla Prabhupāda

Kaunteya Prabhu’s book severely criticises Śrīla Prabhupāda for his strong statements, severely undermines Śrīla Prabhupāda’s general knowledge capabilities, and repeatedly suggests that Śrīla Prabhupāda might have had “cultural conditionings” [page 196] or that Śrīla Prabhupāda was just a “Bengali holy man” [page 636] etc. The following are some more examples from Kaunteya’s book (emphasis ours):

1. We can’t exactly determine if or **how much Srila Prabhupada’s views on sexuality (and homosexuality) were influenced by** Victorian puritanism (possibly through his professors at Scottish Church College?), by his family’s cultural heritage, by his contemporary mainstream Bengali and Indian culture, **or by his reading of sastras.**—[page 275]
2. A brahminical movement should be guided by the principle of honesty. We should be truthful. We should recognize when an affirmation is not factual. **Trying to rationalize that everything Srila Prabhupada ever said is correct, ultimately represents a disservice to him and a distortion of our mission.** It makes his followers look like hypocritical spin doctors or mindless, bigoted zealots. If we can’t admit to facts, how can we expect the public to trust us? How could they take us seriously?—[page 320]
3. Srila Prabhupada’s Scottish professors inculcated in him odd data from an already outdated model. We will never know how much of it was just their archaic “science” and how much, if any, their sexist prejudice - but what they taught wasn’t right. **We will also never know to what extent the false information Srila Prabhupada received affected his views on women.**—[page 408]
4. We elect a specific manifestation close to us as the highest, as incomparable and unprecedented - **although nothing is truly unprecedented in cyclical time.** Contemporary ISKCON followers might unconsciously synthesize their religious worldview into “Sri Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead; Srila Prabhupada is His representative.” This maxim hasn’t yet crystallized into a formal slogan, but it does appear as to float in many ISKCON devotees’ mind - with occasional overt verbalizations. And there is nothing wrong with it - **but we need to understand that,** in this world, the part about **Srila Prabhupada being God’s representative is an historical occurrence in this world, not a perennial axiom.**—[page 632]
5. While Srila Prabhupada’s historical earthly presence (1896-1977) might be meteoritical - the proverbial blink in cosmic time - we accept him, **over and above his circumstantial physical embodiment,** as an eternal being, ... a permanent spiritual person possessing a perpetual sat-cit-ananda identity in the divine realm of Goloka Vrindavana, happily and everlastingly living with Krishna and His associates. There he won’t appear as the Bengali holy man we are accustomed to. In that dimension beyond material time and space, his form, his voice, and his role shall be different; but he will be the same self, and those who dedicated their lives to his

¹ **A person in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness acts by the dictation of Kṛṣṇa.**—[purport SB 3.15.45]

service and mission will live perpetually with him; **his controversial statements about race, sex and sexual orientation finally erased from memory and long forgotten.**—[page 636]

As we stated before, the above list is just the tip of the iceberg of relentless attacks on Śrīla Prabhupāda found in Kaunteya’s book. In a dedicated section, starting from page 626, sub-titled “Perhaps You should try—Forgiveness,” Kaunteya writes:

What I am going to say now it’s highly atypical, and it’s a personal message to those Vaisnavis and Vaisnavas who harbor resentment for some of what Srila Prabhupada said. If you still feel embittered (due to something he said about race, gender, sexual orientation or whatever), and still think that what he said was unfair, unnecessary, or mistaken, you should consider just forgiving him. ... But if you are still seriously affected by some of his “controversial statements,” I wish you can find some closure, some resolution or at least some mitigation of your emotional pain; and you can try to just forgive him for causing whatever pain you are experiencing. Even if the sentences that hurt you could be rationally justified, you might still feel wounded. Please, find the strength in your heart to excuse and absolve him for whatever pain his words caused you. That’s my recommendation - alongside a humble, friendly reminder that you, the eternal self, have no intrinsic or lasting connection with your present body, your present race, your present gender or your present sexual orientation.—[page 626—627]

Kaunteya makes a so-called appeal to all devotees (including seniors who are in his *guru-vargya*) to be magnanimous enough to forgive Śrīla Prabhupāda for the “pain” and “hurt” he has caused them.

We must especially take note of Kaunteya’s last sentence in the above excerpt, in which he preaches to his audience to be humble enough to realize that they are the eternal soul not their present situation (body, race, gender or even sexual orientation). Does this mean that Kaunteya’s words, preaching the eternal truth of the soul, is sweeter and superior to whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda said? In other words, what is the guarantee that Kaunteya’s so-called polished words would not aggravate the situation? Do Kaunteya Prabhu’s statements have greater potency than that of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements, which have been classified by Kaunteya Prabhu as crude and mistaken? Obviously, not! And some evidence for this assertion comes from the following statements of a long-standing Śrīla Prabhupāda disciple, who was personally present when Śrīla Prabhupāda delivered strong powerful lectures regarding the science of Kṛṣṇa, as cited below:

“I joined Srila Prabhupada’s small army of fearless disciples in August 1969. At that time, our faith in Srila Prabhupada was so absolute that we never would consider whether anything he stated was agreeable to the public masses. We never for a moment considered this. It is not relevant.

At least in theory, we first understood that we have nothing to do with this material world. That is a dream. We understood that nature works under the direction of Krishna. We learned that everyone is given their body due to their own work. They made their bed, and now they lay in it. That is reality. That is true. Prabhupada never compromised on this to appease anyone.

He roared in our class in 1970, “Either you love Krishna, or you love the vagina!”. That stunned us. That took our breath away. Why? Because it is true.

How often did Prabhupada explain that one moon is better than millions of stars? How one pure Vaisnava is better than millions of neophytes! How it is better to have fewer men and boil the milk rather than bring in thousands and millions who are not dedicated.”—[Anonymous, 24-March-2023, posted on social media]

This first-hand recollection of an early disciple’s time with Srila Prabhupāda gives us a clear understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mood and mission. Furthermore, the scriptural evidence presented in the following sections further validates, and vindicates, the timeless treasure of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s cutting-edge (*cutting-māyā*) statements, which can at once elevate a conditioned soul to the platform of perfection and self-realization.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words and Śāstras

On page 46 of his book, Kaunteya Prabhu states that we should accept Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words as perfect whenever he is stating from the “original text” (*śāstra*), and not necessarily perfect (potentially mistaken) if the source of information is not based on the “original text.” And on page 408, Kaunteya also says that we will “never know to what extent the false information Srila Prabhupada received affected his views on women,” but Kaunteya appears to be certain that the extent is not “never.” Indeed, to even consider the possibility that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s views could be influenced by false information, one must necessarily presume that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself is a conditioned soul. This idea is at the heart of Kaunteya’s book.

Actually, in his analysis, Kaunteya Prabhu places more importance on *vox populi* and hence misses Śrīla Prabhupāda’s actual point. This misunderstanding appears to be due to a lack of knowledge of the conclusions of the *śāstras* regarding what constitutes sources of knowledge of dharma. We will now show with examples to demonstrate that whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke, it was always in accordance with *śāstra*, and hence his words are also as good as *śāstra*.

In order to explain Vedic principles to modern men of Kali-yuga intellect, Śrīla Prabhupāda at times gave some examples from modern, mundane world views, such as citing Dr Urquhart, his professor at Scottish Church College, on women’s

brain size in connection with their intelligence. For instance, Śrīla Prabhupāda states (emphasis ours to show the part replaced with ellipses in Kaunteya’s version) in a lecture on SB 1.3.21:

I was student of psychology, and our professor---he was a Scotman---he explained **this brain substance, cerebular substance, Dr. Urquhart**, that the more brain substance is there, more one becomes intelligent. And it has been found that a woman does not have more than thirty-six ounce of brain substance, whereas in man it has been found that he has got up to sixty-four ounce. Now, this is modern science.—[Lecture on SB 1.3.21, Los Angeles, 26 Sept 1972]²

Kaunteya’s text, however, distracts the attention of its readers away from the most important point that Śrīla Prabhupāda was making—according to Vedic scriptural evidence women are less intelligent and need to be always protected, and hence they cannot have equal rights with men. Instead, Kaunteya’s text highlights Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ancillary statement regarding the weight of a woman’s brain and claims that Śrīla Prabhupāda was wrong, based on data from the atheistic, mundane researchers in modern science. This is one of many statements in Kaunteya’s book that accuses Śrīla Prabhupāda of relying on and relaying mistaken information.

But it is not Śrīla Prabhupāda who is mistaken, it is Kaunteya who is mistaken for basing his research on demoniac, atheistic world views instead of accepting that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s point was based on evidence from the *śāstras*. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not care for *vox populi* or the data from modern scientific research but backed his points with examples from Vedic scriptures. The following conversation between Śrīla Prabhupāda and Dr. Patel, cited below, supports this:

Prabhupāda: I condemn everyone, that “You are all dogs and hogs.” And United Nation a pack of dogs only.

Dr. Patel: Barking.

² On a side note, in his version of the citation of above lecture on SB 1.3.21 on page 406 of his book, Kaunteya replaced the words “this brain substance, cerebular substance” with ellipses and states that Śrīla Prabhupāda was “plainly wrong” in commenting that brain substance is solely based on the weight of the brain. Obviously, masking five or six words with ellipses is not going to significantly alter the volume of the contents of His book which is already 666 pages long. Rather, the removal of the parenthetical reference “cerebular substance” merely raises the question as to whether Kaunteya misused ellipses to advance his own narrative. In fact, modern science agrees and defines that the cerebral/cerebular brain substance does control the intelligence and memory levels as opposed to the weight of the brain (reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution_of_human_intelligence).

Prabhupāda: Yes, barking. That's a fact. And in Chicago I said, all women, "You cannot have freedom. You have got only thirty-four-ounce brain, and man has got sixty-four-ounce." I told them. So I became a subject of very great criticism. [laughs] [laughter]

Trivikrama: Women's liberation.

Prabhupāda: Yes. I denied, "No, you cannot have." I told them.

Dr. Patel: The women's lib will become very violent...

Prabhupāda: One girl in the airship, she was seeing like [makes some gesture---laughter]. I asked her, "Give me 7-Up." "It is locked now." So I frankly said that "No, no. You cannot have equal rights because your brain is thirty-four ounce." Actually that's a fact. Where is woman philosopher, mathematician, scientist? Not a single.

Dr. Patel: Apart from that, I mean, they are made for a particular mission.

Prabhupāda: How they can have equal rights? Up to date in the history there is not a single woman who is a great scientist or great philosopher or great...

Dr. Patel: Madame Curie was expert...

Prabhupāda: All bogus. [laughter]

Dr. Patel: Sir, you are getting too harsh on them, because they are...

Prabhupāda: No, no. How can I give you equal rights, because your brain is less substance.

Dr. Patel: We cannot degrade our mothers that way.

Prabhupāda: It is not degraded. It is accepting the actual fact.

Dr. Patel: These girls are misled, these American girls.

Prabhupāda: There is no history. There is no history. Just like Kuntī's mother, she produced so many heroes, but she was not hero. She could produce heroes like Arjuna, like Bhima, but not that she becomes hero.

Dr. Patel: Mother can produce heroes, sir,...

Prabhupāda: That's all right. Still, nobody will say that Kuntī is as good as Arjuna or Bhima.

Dr. Patel: How can anybody say?

Prabhupāda: That is... How you'll get the equal rights?

Dr. Patel: No woman smaller than Kuntī could have produced an Arjuna.

Prabhupāda: You can produce. That is another thing. A cook can produce foodstuff suitable for rich man, but that does not mean he is rich man.

Dr. Patel: You argue. [laughs]

Devotee: Prabhupāda, you told one story about the animals having a meeting and trying to become free from the control of [indistinct].

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Dr. Patel: Our śāstras say yatra naryas ca pūjyante ramante...

Prabhupāda: Pūjya... Everyone is pūjyante. That is according to his position. That does not mean equal. Kṛṣṇa Himself worshiped Sudāmā Vipra. That does not mean Sudāmā Vipra is as good as the Personality of Godhead. When Nārada was coming in Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa immediately got down and... Nārada was smiling, "Just see the fun." But etiquette. That is another thing. Nārada never said that "I am better than Kṛṣṇa or equal to Kṛṣṇa." Never said.

Trivikrama: Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira the same.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Everyone. Everyone knew their position. Therefore Kṛṣṇa is addressed by Arjuna, "Acyuta, You promised to drive my chariot, therefore I'm asking You. Don't forget. You never deviate from Your promise." Acyuta. Senayor ubhayor madhye ratham sthāpaya me 'cyuta [Bg. 1.21]. "Don't forget that You are Acyuta. Don't think that I am Your servant, I am ordering." He knows that "I am servant of Kṛṣṇa. I am ordering Him."

Morning walk, Jan. 9, 1977, Bombay audio/transcripts/1977/770109MW.BOM.mp3

From the above morning walk conversation, we find that Śrīla Prabhupāda explains with examples from *śāstra*, the eternal truth that although men and women have equal opportunity to make spiritual advancement, they nevertheless have specific social roles to play and cannot have equal rights.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's point of view on any topic, controversial or not, is always based on Vedic scriptural evidence; he did not base his views merely on mundane data, as Kaunteya's book seems to want us to believe. On page 408, it is said that Śrīla Prabhupāda took guidance from mundane sources and thereby developed sexist, prejudiced views on women in general:

Srila Prabhupada's Scottish professors inculcated in him odd data from an already outdated model. We will never know how much of it was just their archaic "science" and how much, if any, their sexist prejudice - but what they taught wasn't right. We will also never know to what extent the false information Srila Prabhupada received affected his views on women.—[page 408]

Kaunteya Prabhu fails to see the elevated position of Śrīla Prabhupāda on two accounts. Firstly as a *dharmajñā*, or one who knows dharma, all words uttered by Śrīla Prabhupāda's are in accordance with *śāstra*, and hence we should accept all that he stated with the full faith and humility. Actually, *Āpastambasūtra* 1.1.1.2-3, "*dharmajñā samaya pramāṇam vedaś ca*," states that the words and activities of a *dharmajñā* that are not in opposition to *śāstra* are also sources of evidence equal to Vedas even though those words and activities are not mentioned in the *śāstra*. The same information is also presented in *Manu-smṛti*:

*vedo'khilo dharmamūlaṃ
smṛtiśīle ca tadvidāṃ |
ācāraścaiva sādḥūnām
ātmanastuṣṭireva ca || 2.6 ||*

The entire Veda is the root-source of Dharma; also the Conscientious Recollection of righteous persons versed in the Veda, the Practice of Good (and learned) Men, and their self-satisfaction.— (Manu-smṛti 2.6)

*anāmnāteṣu dharmeṣu
kathaṃ syāditi ced bhavet |
yaṃ śiṣṭā brāhmaṇā brūyuh
sa dharmah syādaśankitaḥ || 12.108 ||*

If the question should arise—“How should it be in regard to those points upon which the laws have not been declared?”—[the answer is]—what the cultured Brāhmaṇas declare, that shall be the undoubted law.—(Manu-smṛti 12.108)

Some may contest the relevance of *Manu-smṛti* and other Vedic texts to *bhakti*, or pure devotional service. Such objections are purely based on mental concoctions, because they are not in alignment with the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his predecessor *ācāryas*, who all quoted from *Manu-smṛti* and rated it high in regards to its importance for devotee community.³

Secondly, liberated souls like Śrīla Prabhupāda are in direct communion with the Lord—they can see the Lord face-to-face. Hence, as a knower of the essence of dharma, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words should be accepted as they are even when there is no known, direct source in scriptures for those statements. This is further supported by the commentary of Ācārya Vamśidhara. In his own commentary to Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī’s SB 7.11.7 commentary, he quotes SB *śloka* 1.1.2⁴ and SB *śloka* 1.2.6⁵ and establishes that Śrīla Nārada Muni’s statement—*dharmamūlam hi bhagavān* (the Supreme Lord is the cause or way to know dharma)—is superior to that of the words of Yajñavalkya and Manu, “*vedo'khilo dharmamūlaṃ*” (the entire Veda is the root-source of dharma). This is because

³ In his commentary to SB 7.11.7, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī quotes *Manu-smṛti* 2.6 and the *śloka* from *Yajñavalkya-smṛti*.

⁴ *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām*

⁵ *sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje, ahaituky apratihātā yayātmā suprasīdati.*

the words of Śrīla Nārada Muni, a pure, self-realized devotee of the Lord, are in accordance with the statements of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which establishes that the highest dharma is *yatho bhaktir adhokṣaje* (devotion to the Supreme Lord). However, the dharma described by *Manu-saṁhitā* and *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* is for the attainment of success in the four *puruṣārthas* (dharma, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*), which the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* rejects as *kaitava-dharma*, cheating religiosity.⁶ Similarly, for the same reason citing the statements from *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*, Ācārya Vamśidhara concludes that pure devotees of the Lord like Śrīla Nārada know the essence of all dharmas, and hence his instructions and activities are superior to both *nivṛtti-dharma* practiced by Sanakādaya Rṣīs and *pravṛtti-dharma* practiced by Marīci and others.⁷

The important point to note is that although pure devotees like Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Nārada Muni may sometimes speak words under direct guidance from the Lord, and those words are to be considered in accordance with the *śāstras*. As followers, we therefore must not imitate the actions of pure devotees but follow their instructions while also keeping *śāstra* as the center of all.⁸

Hence, as far as the topic of contention regarding the brain substance of men and women is concerned, Śrīla Prabhupāda's point was to emphasize the statements of *śāstra* that women are less intelligent, cannot be independent and must always be protected at all times. Śrīla Prabhupāda was aware that the people of modern society sometimes criticized his statements. Nonetheless, Śrīla Prabhupāda was not inclined to compromise, nor did he want his followers to budge an inch under pressure from mundane people of the world, as stated below:

⁶ The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s rejection of the four *puruṣārthas* is often misunderstood as an outright rejection of the *śāstras* associated with their attainment. But as per Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, *vedaiś ca sarvair ahaṁ eva vedyah*, "By all the Vedas I am to be known" (BG 15.15), hence, this misunderstanding arises from incomplete knowledge of how such rules and regulations from the *dharma-śāstras* are to be utilized to create favorable conditions for the progress of the *sādhaka* in his *bhakti* towards Kṛṣṇa. For example, the *vivāha-yajña* (marriage ceremony) is not *bhakti*, it is dharma. Yet it is considered favorable for the development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for persons in the early stages of their lives. Śrīla Prabhupāda therefore says in his purport to SB 7.11.7: "One cannot be a pure devotee without following the *śruti* and *smṛti*, and the *śruti* and *smṛti* without devotional service cannot lead one to the perfection of life." Hence, dharma without *bhakti* as its goal cannot bring one to the supreme goal of life, *kṛṣṇa-prema*, and *bhakti* performed in transgression of dharma will be fruitless—indeed, merely a social disturbance, *upataiyaiva kalpate*.

⁷ <https://archive.org/details/SrimadBhagavatamCanto07withMultipleSanskritCommentaries>

⁸ CC Madhya 20.352 purport: "The actual center is the *śāstra*, the revealed scripture. If a spiritual master does not speak according to the revealed scripture, he is not to be accepted. Similarly, if a saintly person does not speak according to the *śāstra*, he is not a saintly person. The *śāstra* is the center for all."

Dr. Patel: This will create some difficulty for your movement?

Prabhupāda: We don't care for it. We will go on. Caravan will pass. Let the dogs bark.

Dr. Patel: The dogs may bite.

Prabhupāda: No. Barking dog never bites. [laughter] Barking dog never bites. They simply make their show. Neither they can bite. We shall go now? [end]

Morning walk, Jan. 9, 1977, Bombay audio/transcripts/1977/770109MW.BOM.mp3

In summary of this section, we should submit to Śrīla Prabhupāda, knowing him to be a *dharmajñā*, and we should take lessons from him on how to deal with controversial topics instead of concocting our own opinions based on mundane atheistic views. Most importantly, we should not put words in Śrīla Prabhupāda's mouth or misrepresent his words to the ISKCON devotee community.

Can self-realized souls or residents of Vaikunṭha commit mistakes?

In order to understand and harmonize certain apparently contradictory or controversial statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda contained in his written and spoken instructions, it is imperative for us to be convinced of Śrīla Prabhupāda's position as an eternally liberated soul and resident of Vaikunṭha. In this section we will study the statements of *śāstra-sādhu-guru vākyas* to understand the characteristics of self-realized or eternally liberated souls. The purpose of this study is to establish, beyond doubt, that Śrīla Prabhupāda's words are non-different from *śāstra* because, as a *dharmajñā*, whatever he said in his written or spoken instructions is in accordance with *śāstra*. Whatever apparent mistakes that one may observe in the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda is mainly due to one's materially conditioned nature of being unable to understand the characteristics of a self-realized soul who is completely absorbed in and surrendered to the Lord.

When we study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, and various commentaries of our *ācāryas*, we understand that originally all souls, as servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa, were in Vaikunṭha-loka, influenced by His internal energy and totally isolated away from His external energy.

However, due to the misuse of our free will, some souls forgot their constitutional position as servants of the Lord and, being influenced by the

external energy, wanted to Lord it over the material energy.⁹ Nonetheless, there are those souls, *nitya-siddha* (eternally perfect and liberated), who never forget Kṛṣṇa, act under the dictations of the Lord, and are never under the influence of external material energy. Hence, *nitya-siddha* devotees do sometimes visit the material world but are never under the control of material nature and hence are never handicapped by the four defects imposed by the material nature.

There are also two other categories of devotees: *sādhana-siddha* and *kṛpā-siddha* devotees. Once either of these two categories of devotees reaches their perfectional stage, then they also have the same characteristics of not being handicapped by the four defects of conditioned life.

In this section we will provide evidence from Vedic scriptures to establish this point.

Ordinary souls vs. eternally liberated souls

As per the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa śloka*, “*yayā kṣetra-jñā-śaktiḥ ...*”- 6.7.62, the soul has the freedom of choice to be influenced by either the external material energy or the internal spiritual energy. Therefore, originally the soul existed prior to the creation of material world and the soul had a freedom of choice to choose to either be influenced by the spiritual energy with full knowledge, or, due to forgetfulness, allow itself to be influenced by the material energy, or *avidyā* potency.¹⁰

*kṛṣṇa bhulī’ sei jīva anādi-bahirmukha
ataeva māyā tāre deya saṁsāra-duḥkha*

“Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the living entity has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial. Therefore the illusory

⁹*viṣṇu-śaktiḥ parā proktā kṣetrajñākyā tathā parā, avidyā-karma-saṁjñānyā tṛtīyā śaktir iṣyate:* “Originally, Kṛṣṇa’s energy is spiritual, and the energy known as the living entity is also spiritual. However, there is another energy, called illusion, which consists of fruitive activity. That is the Lord’s third potency.”—[*Viṣṇu-purāṇa* 6.7.61/Cc *Madhya* 20.112]

yayā kṣetra-jñā-śaktiḥ sāvṛtīyā nṛpa sarva-gā, saṁsāra-tāpān akhilān avāpnoty atra santatān:

O King, the *kṣetra-jñā-śakti* is the living entity. Although he has the facility to live in either the material or the spiritual world, he suffers the threefold miseries of material existence because he is influenced by the *avidyā* [nescience] potency, which covers his constitutional position.—[*Viṣṇu-purāṇa* 6.7.62/Cc 2.20.114]

tayā tirohitatvāc caś aktiḥ kṣetra-jñā-saṁjñitā, sarva-bhūteṣu bhū-pāla tāratamyena vartate:

This living entity, covered by the influence of nescience, exists in different forms in the material condition. O King, he is thus proportionately freed from the influence of the material energy, to greater or lesser degrees.—[*Viṣṇu-purāṇa* 6.7.63/Cc 2.20.114]

¹⁰ “The living entity is eternal, and he existed before the creation of this material world. Unfortunately he has forgotten his relationship with Kṛṣṇa.”—[Cc *Madhya* 20.117 purport]

energy [*māyā*] gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence.—[Cc Madhya 20.117]

The souls that allow themselves to be influenced by the material energy commit the mistake of separating from the Lord and becoming subjected to the four defects of conditioned life. The following are “the four defects” as defined by Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, as quoted in his commentary to the *Tattva-sandarbha*, text 9:

bhramaḥ pramādo vipralipsā karaṇāpaṭavam ceti jīve catvāro doṣāḥ | teṣv atasmimś tad-buddhir bhramaḥ | yena sthāṇau puruṣa-buddhiḥ | anavadhānatānya-cittatā-lakṣaṇaḥ pramādaḥ | yenāntike gīyamānaṁ gānaṁ na gṛhyate | vañcanecchā vipralipsā | yayā śiṣye sva-jñāto'py artho na prakāśyate | indriya-māndyaṁ karaṇāpaṭavam | yena datta-manasāpi yathāvat vastu na paricīyate | ete pramātr-jīva-doṣāḥ |

The four faults found in an ordinary *jīva* are: *bhramaḥ*, *pramāda*, *vipralipsa* and *karaṇāpaṭava*. Among them *bhrama* means acceptance of an object to be different from what it is, e.g. mistaking a pillar to be a person. *Pramāda* means inattentiveness or having one’s mind absorbed in another object, e.g. one is not able to hear some song that is being sung just nearby. *Vipralipsa* means the desire to cheat others, e.g. knowingly not revealing particular knowledge to one’s student. *Karaṇāpaṭava* means weakness of the senses by which even after giving full attention of mind, one cannot properly understand something. These are the four mistakes that an ordinary *jīva* makes in his judgement.

Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī in *Bhakti-sandarbha* (*anuccheda* 1) explains in detail that the reason for the soul’s falldown from the spiritual world to material world is the forgetfulness of his constitutional position:

paramātma-vaibhava-gaṇane ca tat-taṭastha-śakti-rūpāṇām cid-eka-rasānām api anādi-para-tattva-jnāna-samsarga-bhāva-maya-tad-vaimukhya-labdha-chidrayā tan-māyayāvṛta-sva-svarūpa-jnānānām tayaiva sattva-rajastamo-maye jḍe pradhāne racitātma-bhāvānām jīvānām saṁsāra-duḥkham ca jnāpitam |

Also, in describing the *paramātma-vaibhava* we saw the *saṁsāra-duḥkha* (material miserable condition) of the *jīvas* who are

taṭastha-śakti-rūpa of the Lord, who although *cid-eka-rasah* (fully transcendental) are nevertheless, due to their *sva-svarūpa-jnāna* (knowledge of his own svarūpa), covered by the *māyā-śakti*, who thus creates their false-identity with the *pradhāna* consisting of the *sattva-raja-tamo guna*, is the cause for their suffering. This *māyā* (by which the *jīva* is covered) is the one who is eternally having the *chidra* (fault) of *vaimukhya* (being turned away) from Him, the *para-tattva*. This *māyā* (by which *Jīva* is covered) is the one who is having the *chidra* of *vaimukhya* from Him (tat), the *para-tattva*, who is *anādi-para-tattva-jnāna-samsarga-bhāva-maya*, i.e. whose existence is eternally endowed with bhava-maya, the state of *para-tattva-jnāna-samsarga* (transcendental knowledge and existence).—[*Bhakti-sandarbha (anuccheda 1)*]

Nonetheless, there are certain *jīvas* who do not come under the influence of the external energy (*māyā-śakti*) of the Lord, but always remain under direct shelter of the Lord through the influence of His internal potency. This is confirmed in the following *śloka*s from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*grheṣu vartamāno 'pi
sa sāmrajya-śriyānvitaḥ
nāsajjatendriyārtheṣu
niraham-matir arkavat*

Mahārāja Pṛthu, who was very opulent due to the prosperity of his entire empire, remained at home as a householder. Since he was never inclined to utilize his opulences for the gratification of his senses, he remained unattached, exactly like the sun, which is unaffected in all circumstances.—[SB 4.22.52]

*svayaṁ dhanur dvāri nidhāya māyāṁ
bhrātuḥ puro marmasu tāḍito 'pi
sa ittham atyulbaṇa-karṇa-bāṇair
gata-vyatho 'yād uru mānayānaḥ*

Thus being pierced by arrows through his ears and afflicted to the core of his heart, Vidura placed his bow on the door and quit his brother's palace. He was not sorry, for he considered the acts of the external energy to be supreme.

Purport: A pure devotee of the Lord is never perturbed by an awkward position created by the external energy of the Lord.—[SB 3.1.16]

Hence, from the above scriptural evidence, we find that the forgetfulness of Lord Kṛṣṇa causes ordinary souls to fall down to the material platform and become subjected to the four defects. At the same time, there are special souls who never forget Kṛṣṇa and who always act and speak in accordance to the scriptural injunctions and the will of the Lord.

An apt pastime from the *Bhāgavatam*

When we study the pastime in Vaikunṭha involving the doorkeepers Jaya and Vijaya and their dispute with the four Kumāras, and we harmonize our understanding with other statements from *śāstra* and the statements of our *ācāryas*, we get clear direction as to how we should understand the activities of self-realized souls.

In the 15th and 16th chapters in the third canto in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we find substantial evidence that pure devotees of the Lord always act only in accordance with the will of the Lord. Because they have voluntarily prayed to be engaged in pleasing the Lord, they fully surrender their free will in service of the Lord. It is evident from the following statements of our predecessor *ācāryas* that the doorkeepers Jaya and Vijaya understood the desire of the Lord to engage in fighting, as cited below:

*tayoḥ svābhāvaika-siddhatvāt |
yuddha-līlārtham eva tat-prapañcanāt |*

[The Lord of Vaikunṭha to Jaya and Vijaya]: Because they are by nature eternally perfect associates of the Lord, this entire incident was arranged so that the Lord would have the opportunity to enjoy pastimes of fighting with them.—[*Bhakti-sandarbha, anuccheda* 324]

*itthaṁ jaya-vijayau sanakādi-śāpa-vyājena kevalaṁ bhagavato
līlārthaṁ saṁsṛtāv avatīrya iti pādmottara-khaṇḍa-gadyānusāreṇa
ca sva-bhakta-cittākarṣa-vinodāya yuddhādi-krīḍā-nimittatayā
tasya durghaṭa-ghaṭanā-kāriṇyecchayā eva vāra-trayaṁ svīyasya
aṇimādi-siddhi-maya-parama-jyotir-dehasya guṇa-maya-pārthiva-
dehāntara-praveśaḥ |*

Jaya and Vijaya descended to the material world to facilitate the Lord's pastimes there. Their being cursed by the Four Kumaras was simply a pretext. The Lord's pastimes was the actual reason. This is confirmed by the *śloka* from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.16.29): "The Lord then said to His attendants, Jaya and Vijaya: "Depart this place, but fear not. All glories unto you. Though I am capable of nullifying the *brāhmaṇas'* curse, I would not do so. On the contrary, it has My approval." —[*Kṛṣṇa sandarbha anuccheda* 146]

*tatra tayor vaira-bhāva-prāptau khalu muni-kṛtatvaṁ na syāt |
mataṁ tu me [SB 3.16.29] ity atra bhagavad-icchāyās tat-
kāraṇatvena sthāptitatvāt |*

It is not due to the four Kumaras that Jaya and Vijaya attained enmity towards Lord Viṣṇu, but the Supreme Lord's will or "*iccha-śakti*" made four Kumāras as instruments in causing that enmity.— [Prīti-sandarbha]

Conclusion

In the name of protecting Śrīla Prabhupāda and his teachings from the attacks of the mundane world, and to make those teachings palatable to the non-devotees, Kaunteya Prabhu's book *Tough Questions, Difficult Answers on Srila Prabhupada's Contentious Remarks* violated the limits of *maryādā* (etiquette). The book committed the offense of considering one's guru to be on the bodily platform and thus subject to the four defects of the conditioned souls. Even though the intention of the book's author was to serve or protect Śrīla Prabhupāda and his mission, he should have done so only to the extent that Śrīla Prabhupāda, our *ācāryas*, and *śāstra* itself has instructed. The book's portrayal of Śrīla Prabhupāda as an historically extraordinary person but nonetheless materially conditioned soul also offended the faithful followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda.