

# From the Darkness of Lust to the Light of Love: Interpreting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s challenging passage on “rape”

*Graham M. Schweig  
Christopher Newport University  
Graduate Theological Union, USA*

**A**mong the various challenging statements and remarks Prabhupāda makes in his teachings, there is one in particular that precipitated much negative attention, both inside and outside Prabhupāda’s society. It has been the source of great consternation and disturbance. The focus in this essay is the following assertion, published in one of his “purports,” or commentary, which has proven to be one of the most perplexing:

... it is a fact that a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape.<sup>1</sup>

Many followers and outsiders have tried to understand these sixteen words, to figure out what is truly meant. Additionally, however it is interpreted and even lightened or sugarcoated, the passage is still found to be disturbing, baffling, and even embarrassing. In some cases, this one statement and its possible confusing implications has caused followers to reject their teacher and all of his teachings, despite the fact that the subject is hardly the primary focus of his teachings.

The purpose of this essay is to illuminate the meaning of this challenging assertion with the aid of selected tools from traditional Indian exegetical techniques and *mīmāṃsā* hermeneutics, while coming from my own background of modern Western textual criticism. I hope that this essay will bring a much greater clarity and a higher level of understanding to the passage in question as well as put to rest any misconceptions that may surround Prabhupāda's assertion. In the end, this exercise in analyzing the passage, I assert, ultimately reveals aspects of Prabhupāda's teachings and even points to important and ultimate aspects of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* theology.

## PART 1 REVIEW OF INTERPRETATIONS BY FOLLOWERS

There have been many attempts to shed light on and understand the passage in question. And while each of those, unsurprisingly, draws from and engages specific aspects of the three worlds of a text — (1) the world behind the text, (2) the world of the text, and (3) the world reading the text — followers are mostly concerned about the third world. Moreover, there is one thing all these attempts have in common: the desperately felt need to explain the passage to the contemporary world, because the passage, as it stands, is simply unclear.

### Varieties of support for unsystematic interpretations

I identify five ways in which followers have desperately tried to find support for a softer understanding of Prabhupāda's assertion, namely:

- 1 Prabhupāda's personal character;
- 2 perceived stereotypical behavior of women;
- 3 contemporary popular culture;
- 4 anachronistic lexical definitions;
- 5 revered scriptural sources.

Each attempt at interpreting the difficult passage from these various sources of support wants to counter the feared

interpretation which basically says, plain and simple, that women like being raped. But each attempt goes about dismantling this very common and quick interpretation in different ways.<sup>2</sup>

*Support from Prabhupāda's personal character*

Various followers of Prabhupāda have rushed in to protect him from wrong impressions of his personality or character. Indeed, interpretations of the passage in question are often adjusted and even strangely worded to match the morally flawless person that Prabhupāda was. For example, one follower states that “There is no conceivable way Śrīla Prabhupāda thought women like to be forcibly raped . . .”<sup>3</sup> Note the tautological aspect of the phrase “forcibly raped.” Is this follower unwittingly promoting the idea that there is non-forcible rape? The same writer also states, “I really believe the passage as printed does not convey Prabhupāda's intended meaning,”<sup>4</sup> expressing how troubling the direct words of Prabhupāda are for followers.

Another follower states that the primary issue is “whether SP [Prabhupāda] \*condones\* rape.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the controversial sixteen-word statement often gets truncated into a mere five words:

Women like to be raped.<sup>6</sup>

Even with a slightly different wording (i.e., switching out the word “like” with the word “wish”), the present Global Director of ISKCON Communications is concerned about “the misperception of thinking that Srila Prabhupada meant that women wish to be raped.”<sup>7</sup> And another follower expresses worry that others might cast “SP [Śrīla Prabhupāda] in a stereotypical ‘anti-woman’ role,” which, he says, “seems hasty and unwarranted.”<sup>8</sup> These followers assume that Prabhupāda makes a statement from opinion rather than observation. Furthermore, strangely, such followers take Prabhupāda's observation (or, even if it were Prabhupāda's opinion) to be something he condones or approves of, or something he promotes. In doing so, followers probably are adopting the views and impressions that outsider nonpractitioners could glean from

reading such a statement. Thus the derivative, shortened five-word version of the original sixteen words catches on.<sup>9</sup>

*Support from perceived stereotypical behavior of women*

Then there are followers who, in an attempt to determine what Prabhupāda really means by the statement in question, provide the rationalization that “rape” here actually refers to a form of aggressive courting or very forward advances of a man toward a woman. For example, a *brahmacārī* concludes that Prabhupāda actually means to say that “women like a man who’s expert at aggressive seduction, who sweeps them off their feet.”<sup>10</sup> Another follower in the renounced order similarly interprets the passage:

In essence: The male wants to conquer, and the female wants to be conquered. A woman does not want to be sheepishly asked her hand by a bashful, weak-kneed Milquetoast. She wants to be pursued and won, to be fought over by strong and eager suitors, to be swept off her feet.<sup>11</sup>

If any of these types of interpretation of the passage in question are true, then it must be surmised that Prabhupāda used the word “rape” incorrectly and that he really meant something else, something along the lines of what is spelled out above.

*Support from contemporary popular culture*

Other followers attempt to invoke the modern penchant for cheap Hollywood films and hollow romance novels. Attempting to support the interpretation of rape as a man’s aggressive pursuit of a woman, these followers will resort to modern artistic portrayals of romance. A renounced follower confesses his source of information as trashy trade romance novels:

When I lived in San Diego, I used to frequent a used-book shop which . . . had rows and rows of what the book trade calls “romances” — novels for whom the intended readers are obviously women. . . . And even from the covers, the formula is obvious: Whatever the details of the story line, the woman is won, conquered, overpowered, possessed by a strong, powerful man.<sup>12</sup>

He uses this source to make the point that “. . . Hollywood and the book trade are tapping into primal psychological veins, where the blood — you can bet your millions on it — is sure to be flowing. The film producers and book publishers know the heart of their audience.”

Again, another leading practitioner also resorts to the movie and cheap-novel industry as authoritative sources for supporting the point that Prabhupāda does not mean rape but aggressive advances of a man toward a woman:

Any casual viewer of modern movies or novels sees such a psychology played out in story after love story, where women are portrayed as delighting in men’s attention, and seeking to be swept off their feet, in their paramours’ ravishing embrace.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly, these followers are resorting to the part of the “world reading the text” that engages contemporary popular entertainment sources for illustrating what Prabhupāda means by rape.

### *Support from anachronistic lexical definitions*

The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT), the publisher of Prabhupāda’s books, has chimed in to explain the passage. Among its several suggested ways to understand the passage in question is to focus on the lexical definition of rape in hopes of making sense of Prabhupāda’s usage of the word: “Śrīla Prabhupāda appears to be using the word ‘rape,’ in this context, according to a dictionary meaning not in such common use in the twenty-first century.” The word “appears” in the

above sentence is telling. Clearly, there is no systematic treatment of the passage in question, and followers are going to great trouble to justify the appearance of the word “rape” in Prabhupāda’s comment. Thus, the BBT, while admitting that most contemporary dictionaries do not compromise in their definitions of rape to be anything other than an unlawful and personally violating sexual act forced upon a person, has found in obscure and out-of-date dictionaries meanings that rationalize Prabhupāda’s use of the term:

We can see that the standard meaning of “rape” is found here: “unlawful sexual intercourse (by force) with another person without that person’s consent.” But we also find other meanings. For example: “seizure” and “to ravish or transport, as with delight” and in the adjective form: “ravishing, delighting.”<sup>14</sup>

The BBT writer justifies utilizing these “other meanings” for understanding Prabhupāda’s use in the passage because in this view these meanings align better with what Prabhupāda comments on in the scriptural passage:

Ordinarily these meanings are little used, or even considered obsolete, but since the sexual activity described in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is consensual, we are bound to find a meaning that makes sense and that portrays Srila Prabhupada for what we know him to be: an absolutely moral person who could never advocate violence on an innocent and defenseless woman.<sup>15</sup>

Again, the BBT defends Prabhupāda. Note their words, “we are bound to find a meaning that . . . portrays Srila Prabhupada for what we know him to be.” Thus, the followers interpret Prabhupāda’s use of the word as it is aligned with their vision of Prabhupāda as an “absolutely moral person.” And again, they fear that Prabhupāda would be “advocating” the violence of rape. It is obvious that even Prabhupāda’s publisher is rather nervous about the passage and goes to much trouble to defend Prabhupāda.

One interpreter, a woman and a follower, insists that Prabhupāda's definition of rape is provided in the very passage for which Prabhupada produced his commentary, containing the passage in question:

... the definition that Srila Prabhupada is actually using is evident through the story itself and lends itself well to the definitions and descriptions of rape elucidated by Srila Prabhupada in this passage of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The king was aggressive in his display of sexual interest. Even though they were not married, did not know each other, had not courted, the beautiful woman responded favorably to his advances. She loved his long, beautiful arms and how he used them to embrace her. To Srila Prabhupada's definition, King Puranjana was very expert at rape. In time, the couple married and lived together for 100 years.<sup>16</sup>

Again, this writer wishes to adjust the definition of rape to fit the surrounding scriptural passage on which Prabhupāda is commenting. But the surrounding passage tells of a king who is very attracted to a forest woman, who in turn is attracted to the king. It was mutual, it was consensual, and while it was worldly, there was some element of love in their interactions. And as the quoted passage above acknowledges, the couple married and lived happily together for a long time. And yet, the author insists that the king "was very expert at rape," according to Prabhupāda. Thus, she concludes that Prabhupāda's definition of rape is worldly, mutual attraction and interaction between a man and a woman.<sup>17</sup>

### *Support from revered scriptural sources*

Some followers casually throw into their interpretations a reference to one or various *līlās* (pastimes) from scripture as if by doing so they can gain greater support or interpretive reinforcement. For instance, one follower insists that in Kṛṣṇa's divine *līlā* there is somehow an

example of rape when he “carries off” or rescues his beloveds, who are divine personages within in his divine play:

The ultimate attractive male, of course, is Krishna Himself. He carried off Rukmini Devi, snatching her like a lion from the clutches of the jackal Sisupala. Krishna married Satya after defeating seven bulls. Krishna married Lakshmana by carrying her off at her *svayamvara* ceremony, “in the same way that Garuda snatched the jar of nectar from the hands of the demigods.” And Krishna married sixteen thousand other wives after rescuing them from the demon Bhaumasura.<sup>18</sup>

This writer then justifies his referencing events in divine *līlās* by stating the following: “The rapists and romantic heroes of the material world are nothing but perverted reflections of Krishna.”<sup>19</sup> Here, the writer carelessly reduces the rapists and romantic heroes of this world to only “perverted reflections” of the divinity, Kṛṣṇa. This kind of referencing of *līlā* is simplistic and reductionistic, and ultimately disrespectful of the sacredness of divine revelation.

Another application of a scriptural passage is applied to the interpretation of the passage in question:

Look at this sentence from the [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*] (*Madhya* 21.142): “The vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute is very aggressive, and it breaks the vows of all chaste women. Indeed, its vibration takes them forcibly from the laps of their husbands.” Indeed, Kṛṣṇa’s flute is assertively, forcefully “attacking” the chaste women, in this sense from the OED: “attack — to assail with temptations.” Isn’t “to assail with temptations” the same as “to seduce”?<sup>20</sup>

Again, to present the example here of Kṛṣṇa’s flute as a “very aggressive” force that “attacks” chaste women is itself an attack on one of the most beautiful and sacred theological tropes at the very heart of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* theology. And to compare the sublime overwhelming power of the music emanating from Kṛṣṇa’s flute



over the hearts of his beloveds really has nothing to do with rape's rationalized and diluted anachronistic definition. Finally, this is an example of another desperate and futile attempt to explain what Prabhupāda means by rape in the passage in question.

The music emanating from Kṛṣṇa's flute is the love-call of the divine to all beings in all of reality. And it is ironic that the power of Kṛṣṇa's love-call be utilized as a reference to support the mundane seductive aggression or attacks of conditioned men in this world with women. Indeed, the element so blatantly missing in all the interpretations reviewed in this essay is that they have not considered the primary and necessary basis of a love-filled interaction, as compared with a loveless — or even worse — an ultimately violating interaction, coming from the darkest and the lowest regions of lust.

## **PART 2 PRESENTATION OF A SYSTEMATIC INTERPRETATION**

### **The “divisions of order for the interpretation of meaning”**

In Part 1, the various types of arguments for a changed meaning of “rape,” other than the commonly held modern understanding of it, were employed to countervail the ideas that Prabhupāda has been, and could have been, perceiving women as desiring to be raped, or even approved of or condoned women being raped. However, this devotional protection of Prabhupāda and dedication to his mission has, perhaps, produced desperate interpretations that may have blurred what Prabhupāda is truly saying in the passage in question.

Individual senior followers of Prabhupāda as well as Prabhupāda's publishing arm have, to the best of their ability, offered ways to understand this contentious passage. And yet, no reader of this essay will be surprised if such explanations still leave one uneasy about the passage. And with good reason: The straightforward meaning of Prabhupāda's words is typically dodged or avoided, for not one interpretation truly accepts the words as they stand.

In Part 2, I will attempt to offer a more thorough, systematic interpretation of the passage that will produce a clarification which has so far never been realized by any of Prabhupāda's followers. The reader may be surprised by the vision arrived at here. To present a

systematic interpretation, I employ the “Divisions of order for the interpretation of meaning,” known as *vinīyoga vidhi* from the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*.<sup>21</sup> The analysis I conduct here will engage a sequence of six steps in analyzing the passage in question:

- 1 *śruti*: determining direct meanings;
- 2 *liṅga*: analysis of implications;
- 3 *vākya*: analysis of the whole sentence;
- 4 *prakaraṇa*: analysis of greater interdependent contexts;
- 5 *sthāna*: analysis of the place in the author’s whole teaching;
- 6 *samākhyā*: a declaration of the full meaning.

Other methods of analysis could also be employed, but the primary steps are as enumerated above.<sup>22</sup>

(1) *Determining direct meanings, śruti*

The direct meaning of Prabhupāda’s words in the passage in question, as it is found in print over the past several decades, can be analyzed in the following ways. First, there are clearly five discrete components to the assertion:

- 1 ... it is a fact that (*qualified subject / appositional modifying of subject*)
- 2 a woman (*the subject*)
- 3 likes (*the verb*)
- 4 a man who is (*the object*)
- 5 very expert at rape (*qualified object / appositional modifying of object*)

The subject and predicate of this passage are simple: “A woman likes a man.” But what kind of woman? It is not entirely clear from the passage, though it appears that Prabhupāda speaks about all women and what they like. And what kind of man? The passage qualifies the kind of man as a man who is “very expert at rape.”

And what exactly does it mean for a man to be an expert in raping a woman? Is there any way that rape can be something positive and attractive for a woman, or from a woman's perspective? And what sort of man would consider rape as some kind of positive experience?

However, the passage too easily gets short shrifted to the rather troubling suggestion that “women like to be raped,” an assumed meaning that has been so disturbing to practitioners and those outside the tradition.

This first step of a brief but systematic analysis is to take the passage in question as literally and as true to its deliberately chosen and published word as possible. Subsequent steps in this analysis also will be taken to support and be as faithful as possible to the passage's original words and expression. To begin one's interpretation of the passage with the idea that Prabhupāda used the word “rape” here while ignorant of the current, modern definition of the word, is patently absurd, as Prabhupāda's English was remarkably current in all of his writings. Or, if one assumes that Prabhupāda knew the current definition of the word and refused to use it, then he would have outrightly expressed that. I would like to assure the reader that Prabhupāda knew that rape is something “forced” upon a victim, an act “without consent,” and something clearly against the law.

Greater clarity can be achieved through an exegetically grounded paraphrasing of the passage, as I attempt to do in the following:

(1) It is evident [“it is a fact”] (2) that women [“a woman” in the universal sense] (3) are personally attracted to [“likes”] (4) particular men [“a man” of a certain kind] (5) who possess great skill [“very expert”] in forcing a woman into having sexual intercourse with him against her will [“rape”].

The full meaning of the statement as it stands would seem to be conveying a contradiction, and thus the passage's meaning is not fully evident. Even with this paraphrasing exercise for achieving greater clarity of this passage, too many questions arise as to what

is meant. In other words, the direct meanings as they stand, and also as the words are in relation to one another, call for further interpretive probing.

(2) *Analysis of implications, liṅga*

The quick and immediately gained meaning — the take-away message from Prabhupāda’s words in this single sentence — is too easily the following: “It is well known that women desire to be raped by men who are very experienced at raping.” Just from the five components that make up this assertion, one can draw various inferences. And, as shall be shown, the unresolved and curious implications compel the interpreter to go further in the investigation of the passage’s meaning.

First: Prabhupāda asserts that all women, or women as a whole group, are attracted to that portion of men who are skilled rapists. How exactly does a woman like to be forced against her will to enter into sexual engagement? Ostensibly, this implication produces a contradiction. Second: Or is there some way a woman *subconsciously* desires to be ravaged and raped? And third: What exactly is a skilled rapist or a man who is “expert at rape”? Women are supposedly attracted to men who are especially skilled in the act of raping. Obviously, there is no formal training in the skill of rape, so what exactly is being referred to here? Perhaps what is meant is that an expert rapist somehow tricks a woman into a sexual encounter. Perhaps this means the man can fool the woman into believing that he is trustworthy and sincere in the direction of genuine affection when his ulterior motive is to put her into a more vulnerable position to be raped. Or, perhaps this means that the man is able to romantically pursue the woman while surreptitiously spiking her drink, or drugging her without her knowledge, making her utterly vulnerable to being raped. A “date rape,” as it were.

Exploring further implications of this assertion, can it be said that no woman likes a man who is not expert at rape? Is Prabhupāda saying that developing proficiency at rape is desirable for a man?

These and all the possible but shaky implications explored above necessitate scrutiny of meaning at deeper and wider levels.

The full sentence in which the passage is embedded includes the following dependent clause: “Although rape is not legally allowed . . .” Here, Prabhupāda is clearly acknowledging that rape is something illegal and punishable on a societal level. Paraphrased, the full sentence could sound like this: “Although forcing a woman against her will for sex (“rape”) is not accepted by society at large (“legally”) and is punishable by law (“not allowed”), that is, despite the social and legal condemnation of rape, on a personal or psychological level, women nevertheless like those men who are expert at rape.” It is as if to say, rape will go on in any case because wanting it is an intrinsic part of feminine psychology.

That dependent clause indicates that the author clearly knew the meaning of “rape,” and it is highly unlikely, therefore, that the word could be construed to be anything else other than “the crime, typically committed by a man, of forcing another person to have sexual intercourse with the offender against their will” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Again, let it be stated clearly, that Prabhupāda knew the meaning of the word “rape.” There are those of his followers who felt that he did not know the actual current meaning of “rape,” or that he chose to use the word differently, or that he utilized the word in a nineteenth-century colonialist sense. But it is certain that Prabhupāda used the current meaning of the word, as can be seen in his recorded and transcribed conversations.<sup>23</sup>

#### (4) *Analysis of greater interdependent contexts, prakaraṇa*

At this point, it seems sensible to inquire into the ways in which this sentence meaningfully functions in its immediate and wider contexts. In this instance, we find various levels of interdependent contexts: (a) the paragraph in which the sentence functions as the third and last thought; (b) the whole comment on a verse in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*; and (c) any relevant passages within the whole twenty-fifth chapter.

In this regard, the word *vikhyātam* is very significant. A man is always famous for his aggression toward a beautiful woman, and such aggression is sometimes considered rape. Although rape is not legally allowed, it is a fact that a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape. (*Bhāgavata* 4.25.41)

The diverse negative and positive messages, and the apparently contradictory meanings integral to the passage itself, require a determination of the passage's direct meaning. The direct, straightforward meaning, *śruti*, can be ascertained first by breaking down the natural components of the passage and then by offering an exegetically grounded paraphrasing of the passage. Rewording the passage with meanings strictly retained will provide a text on which a truer understanding can be derived.

The passage of only three sentences has six distinct components or assertions, which can be broken down as follows:

- 1 In this regard,
- 2 the word *vikhyātam* is very significant.
- 3 A man is always famous for his aggression toward a beautiful woman,
- 4 and such aggression is sometimes considered rape.
- 5 Although rape is not legally allowed,
- 6 it is a fact that a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape.

An exegetically crafted paraphrasing could sound like the following:<sup>24</sup>

- 1 In regard to the aforementioned discussion on the expectations of men and women in the marital relationship, the following can be said.

- 2 The word *vikhyātam*, which means “generally known,” is important for understanding a natural, reciprocal dynamic that commonly occurs between men and women.
- 3 Men in general are well known and even appreciated (“famous”) for their strongly assertive nature (“aggression”) in the pursuit of women they find attractive (“beautiful woman”).
- 4 And such strongly assertive pursuit (“aggression”) of women in certain circumstances (“sometimes”) is understood (“considered”) as men forcing women against their will to engage sexually (“rape”).
- 5 Although forcing a woman against her will for sex (“rape”) is not accepted by society at large (“legally”) and is punishable by law (“not allowed”), nevertheless,
- 6 It is evident (“it is a fact”) that women (“a woman” in the universal sense) get personally attracted to (“likes”) a man who possesses great skill (“very expert”) in forcing a woman into having sexual intercourse with him against her will (“rape”).

#### THE WHOLE COMMENT TO A VERSE

The words, “in this regard,” point back to the first and previous paragraph. In regard to precisely what? To what was Prabhupāda referring? The paragraph is nicely summed up in its penultimate sentence: “. . . to keep a wife satisfied a husband should give her some ornaments because women are generally fond of home, ornaments, dresses, children, etc.”<sup>25</sup> But Prabhupāda’s key words are found in

the second sentence, which qualifies all these assertions with the following conditional statement: “. . . if a woman loves a man.”

But these key words make the passage in question even more mysterious. Is Prabhupāda speaking about a woman who truly loves a man? Is there any love involved when a woman likes a man who is expert in raping her? And how would that be so? These unresolved questions compel the investigation to go even wider, that is, to encompass the whole chapter of the work and some key materials in a surrounding chapter.

#### THE WHOLE CHAPTER AND SELECT COMMENTS

The purport, or verse commentary, that immediately follows the commentarial passage in question appears to continue a theme: Prabhupāda states that “When a husbandless woman is attacked by an aggressive man, she takes his action to be mercy.”<sup>26</sup> Ostensibly, this sounds like a negative statement. After all, whoever likes to be “attacked” as is stated here? But Prabhupāda states elsewhere that “Generally when a woman is attacked by a man — whether her husband or some other man — she enjoys the attack, being too lusty.”<sup>27</sup> While Prabhupāda speaks of genuine attraction and a mutual, reciprocated love between a man and a woman, the *Bhāgavata* chapters he comments on certainly speak about worldly, mutually agreed upon romance.

But Prabhupāda claims that such love is mixed with animalistic aggression and libido. Prabhupāda characterizes the worldly attraction between a man and a woman as primarily undergirded by the libido. This emphasis on worldly love can be found in numerous places within Prabhupāda’s comments and also in scripture itself. Thus, Prabhupāda’s concluding words to his commentary are as follows: “Thus so-called love within this material world is nothing but sexual satisfaction.”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, as Prabhupāda states in these concluding sentences within his comment to a verse in a later chapter: “Modern human society has improved the materialistic way of life simply by inducing unrestricted sex life in many different ways. This is most prominently visible in the Western world.”<sup>29</sup> It is important to note Prabhupāda’s phrase, “most prominently,” in



these last words. Prabhupāda tacitly acknowledges that what stands out most in male-female relationships is the sex drive, and also the possibility that there is something prominent that lies behind them.

Prabhupāda has clearly established that within worldly male-female relationships, the individuals involved mutually desire one another within the context of a procreative force between them: “Both man and woman desire one another; that is the basic principle of material existence.” And Prabhupāda’s use of the word “attack” is not, therefore, negative to the individuals within this worldly relationship; rather, it is considered within the context of mutual love and acceptance. Thus, the word “attack” here can easily be understood as especially aggressive seduction in the context of mutually agreed upon loving relationship, albeit a worldly love.

How do these various passages help us to interpret the passage in question? It would seem that Prabhupāda is not speaking about the mutually engaged intense passion, or a so-called attack, found in the context of worldly love when he speaks about rape. It is clear from various other discussions and writings by Prabhupāda — the few that Prabhupāda spoke or wrote — that rape, for him, is violent and is an attack on a woman utterly against her will. Prabhupāda spoke, “Yes, that is law always. Rape means without consent, sex. Otherwise, there is no rape.”<sup>30</sup> And Prabhupāda’s other words also acknowledge the difference between loving and raping: “Love is reciprocal, voluntary, good exchange of feeling, then there is love. Not by force. That is rape. . . . Why one is called lover, another is called rape?”<sup>31</sup>

Given Prabhupāda’s understanding of what rape is, it is still difficult to ascertain the meaning of the passage in question: “a woman likes a man who is expert at rape.” How can any woman like a man who is attacking her sexually without her consent? What kind of woman is Prabhupāda speaking about here? And what kind of man is it who is expert at raping a woman? We have looked at Prabhupāda’s words that follow in his comment to the next verse. However, Prabhupāda’s words prior to his comment with the passage in question, I believe, finally provide an understanding of Prabhupāda’s assertion.

It is my contention that the words in the previous commentary (i.e., on *Bhāgavatam* 4.25.40) establish a basis for ascertaining the passage in question, finally offering a way to find the passage meaningful. Prabhupāda launches his comment with the idea that “According to the Vedic system, when one is born in this material world he has many obligations.”<sup>32</sup> One is obliged to the celestial deities and forces, obliged to the forefathers and to society, etc. Prabhupāda concludes by stating that “In this way, as soon as one is born in this material world as a human being, he has so many obligations and is bound to repay all these obligations.” Then Prabhupāda speaks about the *grhamedhī*, or “one who takes sex life to be supreme” and is “overly addicted to material things.”

Prabhupāda clearly understands what an addiction is. It is the opposite end of enlightenment. It is the darkest region in which humans can find themselves:

One who takes sex life to be supreme finds action in Kṛṣṇa consciousness confusing. Either due to his own personal consideration or due to his having taken instructions from others or conferring with them, he becomes addicted to sexual indulgence and cannot act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.<sup>33</sup>

It is evident in the above words that Prabhupāda describes the nature of an “addiction,” which is a state in which a human being values nothing else but the object of the addiction. As Prabhupāda puts it, the addictive object is supreme. And such a person will “like” anything else and seek all else that can feed that addiction. Clearly, the all-consuming fixation on the addictive object makes it impossible to experience the all-embracing nature of the divine, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In his commentary prior to the passage in question, Prabhupāda prepares his reader with the knowledge of an addiction. Perhaps the apparent contradiction in a woman liking a man who has skill in forcing her into sexual engagement against her will exposes a very deep and dark level to which male-female relationships can stoop.

Taking this dark, addictive state into account, perhaps the passage in question can be paraphrased as follows:

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[Sick, unhealthy, and sexually addicted] women [are abnormally attracted to or] like [sick, unhealthy, sexually addicted] men who are expert at [or capable of coaxing, manipulating, and devising any plan to] rape [which is normally repugnant to healthy women and men].

It is important to point out that Prabhupāda claims that generally it is characteristic of a man to pursue a woman “aggressively,” or to be very forward in making advances toward a woman. According to Prabhupāda, such aggressive advances can turn into something so violating that it becomes rape. While a bold but, more or less, respectful pursuit of a woman is generally accepted if it remains within certain boundaries, we speak of rape when such a pursuit has degenerated into a total violation of a woman.

So, when Prabhupāda says “a woman,” as in “a woman likes,” he presents the *woman* in the abstract, referring to all women, or he is employing a synecdoche, making an assertion that speaks about a characteristic of all women. Either way, while Prabhupāda employs a dramatic generalization that refers to all women, he does so only by referring to all women of a *particular type*: all women who are sick due to their extremely unhealthy addiction to sex and the abusive self-harm that comes along with it. Similarly, Prabhupāda speaks about a particular type of man who is skillful in the act of rape, who is sick due to his own extremely unhealthy sex addiction and his clever ways and means to abuse and violate women.

In any kind of addiction, a person is utterly enslaved to the object of the addiction, to the point that nothing else in the person’s life matters. Prabhupāda clearly speaks about the nature of an addiction in the compelling words: “One who takes sex life to be supreme.” Prabhupāda’s own teaching is that the only thing that is worth seeing and relating to as the supreme is the absolute reality, the divinity, whom he teaches is truly “supreme.” To impute supremacy to anything less than the supreme is characteristic of the typical human conditioning in this world. At the worst level,

in the darkest region of human conditioning, a human becomes utterly enslaved biologically and/or psychologically to forms of gambling, intoxication, sex, social addictions, eating disorders, and so on — acts that result in self-destruction and the destruction of others.

To conclude, the only type of woman Prabhupāda could be speaking of here is a woman who could like something that hurts her and enables a man to violate her in order to fulfill her sick, self-destructive need. Now, it is obvious that such a woman is in a very low state of consciousness, in an addictive state, a state about which Prabhupāda speaks very clearly in the comment prior to the one containing the passage in question. As drug addicts like, even desperately need, something that hurts them, so sex-addicted women like to be violated or abused by men who make them feel desired, are skilled at seducing them against their will, and expertly rape them by forcing them into self-destructive activities.

In effect, the assertion “a woman likes a man who is expert at rape” is parallel to the following assertion:

“A drug-addict likes a drug-dealer who is expert at satisfying addiction.”

Both assertions are identical not only in syntactical structure but also in regard to the general dynamic of an addiction, whether it be sexual abuse or substance abuse: humans are abusing themselves, and they are abusing others in their enabling of the abuse.

At this point, we could reasonably ask, Why does Prabhupāda bring up this subject of very low, conscious, self-destructive, addictive behavior? Is Prabhupāda’s comment directly derivative of or related to the subject matter of the *Bhāgavata* chapter in which it is found?

Prabhupāda’s comment on addictive behavior is not obviously related to the chapter’s content. The chapter in which Prabhupāda makes his assertion offers a straightforward narrative about a king named Purañjana, who becomes smitten by the beauty of a woman wandering in a forest. He made advances toward her, began to flirt with her, and the woman was indeed flattered by his advances. In fact, there was a mutual and reciprocal desire to enter

into a romantic, sexually charged relationship. She praises him as a hero, agrees to be an endless source of erotic pleasure for him, and with flirtatious language extols the virtues of family life. Here the *Bhāgavata* depicts a balanced worldly relationship in which the wife's needs are fulfilled, along with those of the husband.

It all seems quite harmless and unrelated to addiction and rape. As mundane and worldly as the relationship between the king and the woman of the forest might be, what is Prabhupāda's purpose in raising the rape issue in the first place, which, as we have seen, was not straightforwardly intelligible?

(5) *Analysis of the place in the author's whole teaching, sthāna*

Why does Prabhupāda mention rape in the context of the king's romantic flirting with a forest woman who appreciates and invites it? Technically, there is no instance of a rape in the whole chapter. As one follower of Prabhupāda states,

Sri Prabhupada is making these statements not to ridicule, subjugate, demoralize or compare the sexual interests of men and women. Rather, out of mercy and pain for the suffering of the living entity, he is simply stating what the soul is enduring with an aim to cutting the knot of material attachment.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, Prabhupāda was a renunciate, and he promoted at least the internal renunciation of worldly ways as well as the avoidance of things and actions that would further entangle us in the external world.

However, Prabhupāda takes things much further, beyond merely cutting the "knot of material enjoyment," to the flowering of pure love for the divine. The whole purpose of Prabhupāda's mission is to provide an education and a practice by which we can fill our hearts with pure affection for the divine, or what Prabhupāda himself so often characterized simply as "love of God."<sup>35</sup>

Prabhupāda alludes to the imperfect loves of this world to educate his followers on how to discern worldly love from pure love,

cautioning them to steer away from the former and to strive for the latter. Prabhupāda easily dismisses any kind of worldly love as ultimately useless and destined to further entangle us in *saṁsāra*, or the cycle of birth and death. In this world, Prabhupāda will often insist, there is no love, only lust, or *kāma*. Thus, Prabhupāda’s discourse may contain unnuanced, black-and-white expressions — something I have described as “*vairāgya* carelessness” — a form of discourse that can be simplistic, but which is usually very dramatic, urgent, and didactic, and which often carries extreme-sounding assertions intended to move readers away from worldly entanglement.<sup>36</sup>

But then, Prabhupāda was more nuanced on the subject of love and spoke so eloquently and far more precisely. In a previous, lengthy article for this journal, titled, “When the Master Speaks,” I have attempted to present only the very beginnings of a systematic translation of what Prabhupāda came to teach.<sup>37</sup> In the present fifth stage of analyzing the passage in question — the step of seeing it in light of the author’s whole teaching — I will develop this stage of interpretation by expanding on the section in that article titled “A theology of love,” in the hopes of shedding more light on the questionable passage on which we are focusing.

#### LOVE ORIGINATES IN THE DIVINE

Prabhupāda warns his followers about the dark (*tāmasa-guṇa*) regions of lust, the arena in which lust intensifies, even to the point of the evil of rape, and such. But the dominant focus of his teachings is illuminating the light (*sāttvika-guṇa*) of pure love. Prabhupāda makes powerful statements regarding the origin of love:

Why we are hankering after loving? Because there is love in Krishna. We are worshiping here Radha-Krishna. Originally there is love.<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, Prabhupāda sees human love as truly emanating from the divine:

. . . Kṛṣṇa has the propensity to love someone of the opposite sex, and therefore we have this same

propensity. The beginning of love is present in the eternal love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. We are also seeking eternal love, but because we are conditioned by the material laws, our love is interrupted. But if we can transcend this interruption, we can take part in loving affairs similar to those of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī. Our aim should therefore be to go back home, back to Kṛṣṇa, because since Kṛṣṇa is eternal, we shall there receive an eternal body.<sup>39</sup>

As in the words above, Prabhupāda warns that love can be compromised and mixed with worldly elements. If the human condition is addressed, then it can be transcended and a whole eternal world of love can be attained:

He likes every part and parcel of His different potencies to take part in the blissful *rāsa* because participation with the Lord in His eternal *rāsa-līlā* is the highest living condition, perfect in spiritual bliss and eternal knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

Lofty words such as these can shed, by stark contrast, further light on the very dark human condition of addiction to worldly elements that destroy life, such as the addiction to sex. It is this unending light of pure love on which Prabhupāda focuses his whole teaching. But to do so, he must show his readers how far away the human heart can stray.

#### CHARACTERISTIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LUST AND LOVE

Prabhupāda can be very pessimistic about attempts at loving in this world. By comparison, he often speaks of divine love's purity as something so high and apart from worldly love and lust:

Lust and love, what is the difference between lust and love. In the material world there is no love, because everyone is directed by lust. The so-called love . . . A

young boy is trying to love a young girl, or a young girl is trying to love a young . . . , but the background is lust. There is no love. It is simply a show of love.<sup>41</sup>

And yet Prabhupāda makes the astonishing point that lust can be transformed into love for the divine, despite the ubiquity of lust in this world:

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is so nice that you can transfer your lust into love for God. Everyone is lusty. Everyone is lusty. Man or woman, everyone is lusty.<sup>42</sup>

Prabhupāda’s statements on love may sound pessimistic, but a full view of his teachings reveals that seeking true love, pure love, is human nature and that this love is dormant within human hearts.

#### LOVE CANNOT BE FORCED

Prabhupāda clearly states, “You cannot make one or force one to love you. It comes automatically.”<sup>43</sup> In the following words, Prabhupāda contrasts true love while acknowledging that rape is something forced:

That is not love. That is threatening. Love is reciprocal, voluntary, good exchange of feeling. Then there is love, not by force. That is rape. Then, why one is called love? And another is called rape?<sup>44</sup>

Again, it bears repeating here what has been shown earlier in this essay. A woman who likes a man who is expert at rape is someone who is not engaged in a relationship that is “reciprocal” in the genuine sentiments between hearts and is not filled with a “good exchange of feeling.” Such unhealthy relationships, in which each person uses the other to satisfy self-destructive or extremely unhealthy selfish needs, have an addictive nature.



Prabhupāda clearly establishes the ontological dimension of love as something that is essential to human existence:

Therefore we, being part and parcel of God, we are also trying to love. A man is trying to love another woman, woman is trying to love another man. This is natural. This is not artificial.<sup>45</sup>

These words demonstrate that Prabhupāda sees all love as originating in the divine; thus he obviously takes the love between lovers of this world very seriously. And while he recognizes the universal principle of love, he also recognizes that the energy of the heart can be misplaced onto the temporal part of another person:

*Sneha* means affection. Everyone has affection. The cats and dogs also have affection. But our affection is wrongly placed. We are affectionate for the skin, for the body. This is wrong affection. Real affection is for the soul.<sup>46</sup>

Prabhupāda insists that we love the essence of another person from the essence of our own being and that humans, in their confusion, should not love the temporal body of a person as the ultimate aspect of that person.

#### LOVE OF GOD LIES DORMANT WITHIN HUMAN HEARTS

A strong theme that runs throughout Prabhupāda's teachings, and in the very sacred texts for which he provides voluminous commentaries, is the idea that lying dormant within human hearts is the love for the divinity.<sup>47</sup> Prabhupāda has said, "And our attempt is to awaken the dormant love of Kṛṣṇa. Everyone has got love — the stock of love is there — but it is being misused."<sup>48</sup>

Building on his ontological assertion that love is essential to sentient beings, and thus able to speak about the universality of

love and the loving nature of beings, Prabhupāda, again, speaks about the dormant state of the purest and highest love that can be offered to the divine:

The basic principle of the living condition is that we have a general propensity to love someone. No one can live without loving someone else. This propensity is present in every living being. Even an animal like a tiger has this loving propensity at least in a dormant stage, and it is certainly present in the human beings. . . . That missing point is how to stimulate our original love for Kṛṣṇa and how to be situated in that position where we can enjoy our blissful life.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, the ultimate focus of Prabhupāda's mission was to awaken in persons this dormant love for the divine, transforming their lives into a truly godly and eternal existence.

#### THE NATURE OF TRUE LOVE

When followers attempt to interpret the difficult passage on which we have been focusing in this essay, it is ultimately not a question of whether a woman likes a man who rapes her, or whether a man has expertise or a lack of it in raping a woman. Ultimately, it is a question of whether love exists in a relationship or not. Prabhupāda speaks about “real love” in the following words:

To love means to be concerned for the other person's benefit. That is real love. I love you for your benefit; you love me for my benefit. If I so-called love you for my benefit, that is lust. In this material world there cannot be love.<sup>50</sup>

Here, the essential point is whether a person's energy is extended to someone else for the sake of one's self or for the sake of the other. Prabhupāda teaches that the most subtle and yet most powerful layer of conditioning for the pure, spiritual, and eternal nature of

the self is the *ahankāra*, which can easily be translated as “making (*kāra*) the I (*aham*) the center.” Or in simpler terms, “self-serving” or “selfish centeredness on one’s self.”

Prabhupāda teaches us that love is the antidote:

To love means to be concerned for the other person’s benefit. That is real love. I love you for your benefit; you love me for my benefit. If I so-called love you for my benefit, that is lust. In this material world there cannot be love. It is not possible, because the so-called love is for our own sense gratification. A young boy loves a young woman for his sense gratification, not for her sense gratification. Similarly, she also. In this material world this cheating is going on. I want to satisfy my lusty desires, but it is going on in the name of love.<sup>51</sup>

Love, therefore, is about being centered upon someone else; lust, therefore, is about being centered upon oneself. And while Prabhupāda paints a rather black-and-white picture — either love or lust — it is true that love and lust can coexist in a person. The very fact that love for God is dormant in humans means that whatever amount of lust there might be, some modicum of love exists, so that we sometimes act more selflessly and at other times more selfishly.<sup>52</sup>

(6) *A declaration of the full meaning, samākhyā*

In this final step of interpretation, in which a declaration of the full meaning of the passage is disclosed, I would like to offer concluding words as to what this controversial statement means in as brief a statement as possible. The brevity of my statement could function as a very helpful and supportive annotation, referenced with a superscript number appended to the last word at the end of Prabhupāda’s purport. Such an annotation should ideally have as few words as possible yet explain the passage in some full sense. It should also offer the reader an inspiring way of understanding and viewing the subject. My proposed annotation is the following:

In this passage, Prabhupāda describes a devolved state of consciousness in which the romantic exchanges between people in this world can potentially turn disturbingly dark. Cautioning his readers, Prabhupāda states that, factually, worldly relationships have the potential to move into the most destructive regions of lust, including sexual abuse in the form of rape. In this particular case, Prabhupāda presents to us — in a nutshell — the unhealthy dynamics that characterize addictive exchanges, as he reveals in the last words of the previous purport: persons who are addicted to being sexually violated, and persons who are addicted to sexually violating. Carrying forth his previous observation on sexual addiction, Prabhupāda further illuminates how deeply damaging sexual addictions are by objectifying the participants, ruining any chance of cultivating a spiritual life. As Prabhupāda’s whole mission was intensely focused on how humanity can attain a pure and perfect love, and on inspiring and teaching humanity to seek out and favor relationships that elevate consciousness into loving God, this demonstration of some of the darkest regions of human interactions acts as a reminder — especially in our addiction-prone cultures — of the important role vigilance plays in spiritual life.

Followers have voiced the importance of placing annotations in Prabhupāda’s books to supplement a few key areas, such as the challenging passage treated here, to thus assist readers in understanding his words.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, beyond mere ‘fluid’ annotations that respect the author’s original publication as fixed, the need for even commentarial illuminations of Prabhupāda’s writings have been expressed.<sup>54</sup>

### *Concluding thoughts*

The chapter of the *Bhāgavata* in which the passage in question is found, as we have noted, is about a king and a woman who find

themselves romantically attracted to each another. Although this shared romance does not in the least indicate an act of rape, Prabhupāda, nevertheless, raises the issue of rape in a comment following his earlier comment in which he speaks about sex-addiction. Again, what is the relevance of these themes of rape and sex-addiction in relation to the chapter theme? Even if the word “rape” is softened to mean the desire of a woman being aggressively pursued in charmingly clever ways by a man, the principle with which, I believe, Prabhupāda was working is ultimately the same: If the most intimate of relationships between persons in this world are grounded in mere sexual energy — a libido-driven, hormone-infused desire to fulfill one’s own lower-chakra urges — indeed, even if consensual, to an elevated devotee (*bhakta*), it is a rape of the soul, as it were. From the point of view of a truly dedicated *bhakta* absorbed in divine love, physically objectifying another person is tantamount to rape. Such a utilitarian relationship excludes the pure caring and giving necessary for true love. And, yes, such relationships are too often displayed in cheap romance novels or films. However, Prabhupāda acknowledges that love’s pure essence is dormant in all humans, a love that can be activated — even if just partially — in loving relationships within this world.

It is fair to say that Prabhupāda’s whole mission was centered upon bringing sacred knowledge to persons around the world to uplift all into a God-conscious life. Prabhupāda’s ardent desire was to awaken the dormant love in the hearts of all, a state in which persons can be truly self-giving, self-sacrificing, self-transcending, selflessly serving divinity and humanity. His teaching revolved around the offering of the whole heart to the divine beloved, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, achieving the purest love attainable, *kṛṣṇa-premā*. Indeed, his sole purpose was to take souls from the darkness of lust to the light of love. His interest was to turn the *ahamkāra* — no matter how dark and destructive such self-centeredness may be — into what we might call the *anyakāra*, or “a truly loving centeredness on another;” and ultimately a *paramānyakāra*, or “centeredness on the supreme other.”<sup>55</sup> It is in this context that we must understand all else that Prabhupāda taught, including the darker topics of sexual addictions.

- 1 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 4.25.41, purport.
- 2 It should be pointed out, interestingly enough, that none of these many attempts end up with the specific conclusion and broadly framed contextual understanding this study offers.
- 3 Draviḍa Dāsa. Unpublished paper.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Statement by Jayādvaita Swami; located in <https://www.thespiritualscientist.com/2015/03/how-do-we-understand-srila-prabhupadas-statements-on-rape/>.
- 6 A shortened version of Prabhupāda's original wording such as this, assumed to be a mere abbreviation of what he is stating in his original words, can be found in the thinking of Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa. Viśākhā Devī Dāsī also is concerned that after reading Prabhupāda's words, persons could have the misimpression that "Srila Prabhupada in any way condoned rape in any form."
- 7 Anuttama Dāsa, the Global Director of ISKCON Communications; located in <https://www.thespiritualscientist.com/2015/03/how-do-we-understand-srila-prabhupadas-statements-on-rape/>.
- 8 Statement by Jayādvaita Swami; located in <https://www.thespiritualscientist.com/2015/03/how-do-we-understand-srila-prabhupadas-statements-on-rape/>.
- 9 For Prabhupāda's followers it is unthinkable that he would condone rape, as the following words of Viśākhā Devī Dāsī, a loyal follower, attempt to convey: "Regarding the recent concerns over Srila Prabhupada's statements on rape, I recall my godsister telling me, 'During a brief stay over in Delhi, my husband was Prabhupada's secretary, and I was his cook. We were on a rooftop where Prabhupada, while getting a massage, was reading mail that had accumulated during our travels. I was preparing lunch in a corner of the roof. Prabhupada, holding a letter in his hand, called me over and with tears in his eyes told me that Saradiya had been raped by five men (this was in Trinidad where she had gone with her husband to open a center). Srila Prabhupada was visibly distressed over this unfortunate incident.' Hardly the reaction of someone who views women as inferior or thinks that they like to be raped." (Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa, *The Spiritual Scientist*,

March 15, 2015; located in <https://www.thespiritualscientist.com/2015/03/how-do-we-understand-srila-prabhupadas-statements-on-rape/> .

- 10 Draviḍa Dāsa. Unpublished paper.
- 11 "Expert at rape" May 26, 2007 by Jayādvaita Swami; located in [https://www.jswami.info/expert\\_at\\_rape/](https://www.jswami.info/expert_at_rape/) .
- 12 Ibid. In the same piece, this writer even refers to Hollywood for an authoritative source: "In that sense, a man is attractive to a woman when he is bold, strong, valorous, assertive, aggressive, 'manly,' and so on. Hollywood knows this, and so we have box-office stars like Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarznegger (or however he spells his name), et al."
- 13 Anuttama Dāsa, ISKCON Communications Director, located in <https://www.thespiritualscientist.com/2015/03/how-do-we-understand-srila-prabhupadas-statements-on-rape/> .

Urmilā Devī Dāsī, in a private correspondence, also references a pop song that she feels may express something of what Prabhupāda means:

However, he also uses the word rape in a different sense. He brings up the psychological point that women will sometimes say "no" and resist sexual behavior even if they enjoy it and want it. (This type of behavior is displayed by the true, eternal females of the topmost realm.) A man the woman truly loves and wants may, therefore, apparently "force" himself on her as part of the general flirtation and "game." I remember reading in some newspaper headlines quite a while ago that there was an uproar over some popular song in which a female singer used the lyrics, "When I say no, I mean yes." The uproar was that such lyrics would encourage rape. The difficulty is that when women sometimes say no, they do mean yes [word bolded by the author].

- 14 The BBT statement is located in <https://vaishnaviministry.org/on-rape-in-the-fourth-canto/> .
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Sudharmā Dāsī, in her article, "Is Srila Prabhupada Referring to Brutal Assault When He Uses the Word 'Rape?"; located in <https://vaishnaviministry.org/on-rape-in-the-fourth-canto/> .

Draviḍa Dāsa also relies on lexical sources to interpret the word rape differently: “But in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED)—an invaluable sourcebook for illuminating what Prabhupāda actually meant, in context, by such words as envy, flavor, purpose, sufficiently, and aggression—we find the positive connotation in this def.: “Also, feeling or energy displayed in asserting oneself, in showing drive or initiative; aggressiveness, assertiveness, forcefulness. (Usu. as a positive quality.)” Now our core sentence is looking a little different: ‘A man is always famous for [assertively attacking] a beautiful woman which is known as generally raping.’”

17 For the record, here are two lexical definitions of “rape” as both a noun and transitive verb. The first is from [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com):

*noun*

unlawful sexual intercourse or any other sexual penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person, with or without force, by a sex organ, other body part, or foreign object, without the consent of the person subjected to such penetration. See also sexual assault. *statutory rape*.

an act of plunder, violent seizure, or abuse; despoliation; violation: *the rape of the countryside*.

*Archaic.* the act of seizing and carrying off by force: *The rape of the Sabine women is the subject of several classical sculptures and paintings that depict Roman soldiers kidnapping unwilling brides.*

*verb (used with object), raped, rap-ing.*

to commit the crime of rape on (a person).

to plunder; despoil: *The logging operation raped a wide tract of forest without regard for the environmental impact of their harvesting practices.*

*Informal: Offensive.* to totally defeat, wreck, dominate, or decimate.

*Archaic.* to seize, take, or carry off by force.



*noun* 1

the crime, typically committed by a man, of forcing another person to have sexual intercourse with the offender against their will: *he denied two charges of attempted rape | he had committed at least two rapes*. • *archaic* the abduction of a woman, especially for the purpose of having sexual intercourse with her: *the Rape of the Sabine Women*. 2 the wanton destruction or spoiling of a place or area: *the rape of the Russian countryside*.

*verb* [*with object*]

1 (typically of a man) force (another person) to have sexual intercourse with the offender against their will: *the woman was raped at knifepoint*. 2 spoil or destroy (a place): *the timber industry is raping the land*.

- 18 "Expert at rape" May 26, 2007 by Jayādvaīta Swami; located in [https://www.jswami.info/expert\\_at\\_rape/](https://www.jswami.info/expert_at_rape/) .
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Draviḍa Dāsa. Unpublished paper. "Aggressive," "breaks the vows," and "takes forcibly" are expressions that are describing the words "the vibration of His flute attracts"; *ākaraṣane uddhata* also means "elevated," "raised," "struck," "intense."
- 21 Edgerton: *vinīyoga-vidhi* (p. 64–110) "Six Means of Interpretation" "This section is one of the prize pieces of the Mīmāṃsā, and one must admit that it contains a great deal of subtle and ingenious analysis." (p. 9)
- 22 Derivation of meaning according to śāstric sources:  
*San̄gati*, or synthesis, that is, agreement of proposition with other parts of śāstra
- a *śāstra san̄gati*: consistency with scripture;
  - b *adhyāya san̄gati*: consistency within the whole work;
  - c *pāda san̄gati*: consistency within the whole chapter down to the smallest portion of the work.
- 23 "Yes, that is law always. Rape means without consent, sex. Otherwise, there is no rape." (Morning Walk, 11 May 1975, Perth, Australia). "Love is reciprocal, voluntary, good exchange of feeling,

then there is love. Not by force. That is rape. . . . Why one is called lover, another is called rape?" found in Conversations/1976/jul/evening\_darsana/washington/july/08/1976 .

"There is no law; it is all lusty desire. All law or no law, these are all nonsense. The *śāstra* has . . . It is lusty desire, that's all. Everyone wants to fulfill lusty desires. So unless one is not in the modes of goodness or transcendental, everyone will like. That is the material world, *rajas-tamah*" (Morning Walk, 11 May 1975, Perth, Australia). "There are cases of rape. The victims are women. Why the victim is not man? Why? In every rape case the sufferer, or the victim, is woman. And why not the man?" (Conversation on 9 July 1975, Chicago).

- 24 It is a common practice in traditional commentaries to paraphrase what is understood in a passage. Some paraphrasing is so close, that such an exercise will engage some or most of the words in the original passage, but rearranged with embellished wording to aid in the commentator's exegetical presentation. Yet other paraphrasing utilizes other wording that is very close to the original for purposes of greater understanding.
- 25 Without reference details, Prabhupāda attributes this claim to the *Manu Saṁhitā*.
- 26 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 4.25.42, commentary.
- 27 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 4.26.26, commentary.
- 28 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 4.25.42. Even though not directly relevant to the passage in question, the following words reveal the world of the text, that is, Prabhupāda's words, in which he subscribes to Indian beliefs that women need to be coupled with a marriage partner early on in life:

It is therefore the duty of the father to get his daughter married before she attains puberty. Otherwise she will be very much mortified by not having a husband. Anyone who satisfies her desire for sex at that age becomes a great object of satisfaction. It is a psychological fact that when a woman at the age of puberty meets a man and the man satisfies her sexually, she will love that man for the rest of her life, regardless who he is.

It is believed that this arrangement for childhood marriage solves the problem of unwanted pregnancies, the risk of sexually transmitted diseases in the dating of multiple partners, and so on, and thus Prabhupāda states that idea. However, to modern peoples in most of the world, Prabhupāda's idea is utterly unacceptable.

- 29 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 4.26.26, commentary.  
 30 Morning Walk, 11 May 1975, Perth, Australia)  
 31 Located in Conversation/1976/jul/evening darsana/washington/  
 july/08/1976 .  
 32 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 4.25.40, commentary.  
 33 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 4.25.40, last words of Śrīla Prabhupāda's com-  
 mentary.  
 34 Sudharmā Dāsī.  
 35 Please see my explication of Prabhupāda's ultimate focus as "love  
 of God" in the section titled, "A teaching on human and divine  
 love" (and the following sections) in my article, titled "When the  
 Master Speaks: Ways of understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda's chal-  
 lenging teachings and form of discourse" (*ISKCON Communica-  
 tions Journal*, Volume 13, 2022), pp. 86–97.  
 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 79–81.  
 37 *Ibid.*, pp. 73–110.  
 38 Lecture on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 2.1.5, Delhi, 8 November 1973.  
 39 *Teachings of Queen Kuntī*, Chapter 15.  
 40 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 3.25.4, purport.  
 41 Lecture given in Seattle, Oct. 18, 1968; *Audio file*: audio/trans-  
 scripts/1968/681018LE-SEATTLE.mp3  
 42 *Bhagavad Gītā* 3.36–37.  
 43 Slightly edited version of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.19.53. The origi-  
 nal reads as follows: "You cannot make one forced to love you. It  
 comes automatically."  
 44 8 July 1976, Washington, D.C.  
 45 Lecture on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 2.1.5, Delhi, 8 November 1973.  
 46 Lecture given in New Vrindaban, West Virginia, on 25 June 1976.  
 47 I examine this theme of "dormant love" in some depth. See "A  
 teaching on human and divine love" in my article, "When the  
 Master Speaks: Ways of understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda's chal-  
 lenging teachings and form of discourse" (*ISKCON Communica-  
 tions Journal*, Volume 13, 2022), pp. 86–9.

- 48 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.14.44.  
 49 *Nectar of Devotion*, Preface.  
 50 New Vrindaban, West Virginia, on 25 June 1976.  
 51 Lecture given in New Vrindaban, West Virginia, on 25 June 1976.  
 52 Consciousness and the heart can be shaded by darker shades of  
 one's conditionings, viz., *tāmasa guṇa*, but there is no such thing  
 as "pure darkness," or *viśuddha-tamaḥ*. Yet, there is such a thing as  
 "pure light," or *viśuddha-sattva*.  
 53 Urmilā Dāsī offers some very wise words regarding the way that  
 Prabhupāda's publisher, the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, may in  
 the future incorporate a mechanism by which the reader can be  
 enlightened on difficult passages in his books:

"My suggestion, in general, for 'difficult' passages, is either foot-  
 notes or notes in an appendix. . . . I remain strongly opposed  
 to such changes without notation, as they open the door to all  
 sorts of dangerous tampering with Prabhupada's words. Simply  
 changing the books when we know that they represent what  
 Prabhupada said will almost certainly lead, in time, to books  
 that keep changing with the politics and social situation of the  
 times. . . .

"In regards to leaving things, without notes, we might consider  
 that sooner or later much of Prabhupada's English will no longer  
 be 'current usage.' If the English language continues to be  
 a living one, it will gradually change so that very unintended  
 meanings would be derived from Prabhupada's words. One can  
 still purchase Shakespeare's works, for example, in the original  
 language without notes. However, in many cases the reader  
 will then be misled into a false understanding. It is much more  
 common, therefore, to get Shakespeare's works with notes on  
 the side or the bottom of the page. My point is that eventual-  
 ly we will need either to 'translate' Prabhupada's books entirely  
 into what will then be spoken English (this has been done with  
 the Bible because the King James version is not so accessible to  
 many people) or to have notes. The choice of leaving things as  
 they are will prove to be less and less possible.

“It is standard practice in sacred literature for there to be notes in the margins, at the bottom of the page, or in the back of the book. One will find this method used in all Jewish scripture, and in many editions of the New Testament. I have seen this with editions of the Qu’ran, etc. also. . . .” (Urmilā Dāsi’s private correspondence. Permission granted by the author.).

- 54 See “New Commentaries Protect Srila Prabhupada’s Legacy,” by Arcana-siddhī Dāsi, located in <https://harmonist.us/2017/02/new-commentaries-protect-srila-prabhupadas-legacy/> .
- 55 The terms *anyakāra*, or “centeredness on the other,” and *paramanyakāra*, or “centeredness on the supreme other,” are my own. The former term is found in the Sanskrit lexicon, meaning “intent on other business” (MMW dictionary). However, my use of the term as the antonym of *ahamkāra* is original. The latter term is not found in the Sanskrit lexicon.

**GRAHAM M. SCHWEIG** is Professor of Philosophy and Religion and Director of Studies in Religion at Christopher Newport University in Virginia. He is also Distinguished Teaching and Research Faculty at The Center for Dharma Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Schweig did his graduate studies at the University of Chicago and Harvard University and earned his doctorate in comparative religion from Harvard. His scholarly specializations are Hindu traditions and Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, the philosophy and history of Yoga, love mysticisms, and the comparative theology of religions. He has over one hundred published chapters, articles, reviews, and several books. Among his published books is *Bhagavad Gita: The Beloved Lord’s Secret Love Song*, published by Harper Collins (2010). He is currently working on his translation of and commentary on *The Yoga Sutra*, to be published by Yale University Press. Forthcoming from Columbia University Press is the *Bhagavad Gita Comprehensive Concordance: With Various Supporting Sanskrit & English References*; and from Oxford University Press, *The Yoga of Love: When Divinity Calls Our Souls to Dance*. He also has several edited volumes coming out. Over the past two decades, Schweig has offered over three dozen invited lectures at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

