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“Actually I was very happy with the progress made this year by the women in a most peaceful and responsible manner. But just one or two uncultured women practically destroyed all the progress made by responsible matajis like Mother Kusha and others.”

— **DEENA BANDHU DAS**
ISKCON Vrindavan Management

As the temple president of Bhaktivedanta Manor, I would like to point out an important piece of information that Deena Bandhu and other administrators in Vrindavan seem to have missed.

In the article printed on this page, Deena Bandhu says that at Bhaktivedanta Manor, men pay their obeisances in front of all the altars and move to the right side and the ladies occupy the left side of the temple room, which is true on normal days, but when it

This is what happened in Vrindavan

By *Deena Bandhu dasa*

When I was in Alachua this past Spring for my daughter's wedding, my godsister Sunita mentioned to me how she was disgusted how Parvati and a very few mataji's disturbed the atmosphere of the Kartik festival. She said it was so foolish to think that the Lord cannot see you in the back. On the way back to Vrindavan when I passed through London, this same topic came up. I was talking with a few Matajis of non-Indian descent, one of whom was part of the delegation of matajis that had successfully requested Mahaman for better facilities at Mangal Artik Darshan, the others being young women's activists. They also complained to me that a certain few women unnecessarily disturbed the atmosphere at Kartik in Vrindavan. True to their complaints, it was Parvati and a small band that sparked the trouble again this year.

Actually I was very happy with the progress made this year by the women in a most peaceful and responsible manner. But just one or two uncultured women practically destroyed all the progress made by responsible matajis like Mother Kusha and others. In fact my Godsister Mother Radha Kund, wife of Jasomatinandan and senior most woman in the Indian Yatra said, “This whole incident could have been avoided if the women had behaved themselves properly. I believe we should have the women attend classes on proper behavior.” In reality the vast majority of vaishnavas and vaishnavis behaved themselves in a most civilized and vaishnava manner and everyone enjoyed a very ecstatic Kartik festival.

Last year a party of women headed by a senior Godsister, Mother Kusha, asked Mahaman for better darshan facilities for the women at Mangal Artik since at festival time it becomes quite crowded and the women are way in the back. It was mutually agreed

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is crowded on festival days, the women stand in front on the left and the men stand in front on the right.

So please don't drag Bhaktivedanta Manor's good name into this. What happened in Vrindavan isn't anything I would have recommended.

*Your servant,
Vipramukhya Swami*

that the sannyasis and men would be allowed to offer their dandavats at all the three altars and that after the ghee lamp was offered the men would leave the Radhashyamsundar altar to the women. The meeting was very cordial and Mahaman acted as the gentleman that he actually is. From the very beginning, Parvati and a few others never honored this agreement and stood in front of the RS altar from before the curtain was opened making it difficult for the sannyasis to offer their dandavats.

Again this year as the Kartik festival became more crowded, several sannyasis arrived and experienced this difficulty, including HH Giriraj Maharaj, Lokanath Maharaj, Radha Govinda Maharaj, and Sridhar Maharaj. I understand that Mahaman again met with Mother Kusha and others and they mutually agreed upon the following year's arrangement. When it was announced after Mangal Artik the next day, immediately Parvati began to verbally abuse Mahaman. So we see the first instance of abuse, though not physical was from Parvati. The next morning she firmly planted herself blocking HH Giriraj Maharaj and others from offering their obeisances to RS. In fact she began pushing innocent women in their way. So again the first instance of manhandling of women was by Parvati herself.

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HH Giriraj and Lokanath Maharaj complained very forcefully to Mahaman that such outrageous behavior and disrespect of authority cannot be tolerated. Right or wrong Mahaman and his management team decided to go back to the system as has been in place for more than 25 years from the time of Srila Prabhupada, men in front and women behind. So Aindra moved his 24 hr kirtan party in front of RS altar from before Mangal Artik and many other brahmacaris joined him. When Parvati saw this she pushed and shoved her way through the men to the front of the altar. Again we see the manhandling was initiated by Parvati against the men, and the men taken by surprise from behind naturally reacted without being aware who was pushing or shoving from behind. The next morning, seeing Parvati coming, they locked arms while she did her best to push through them. Failing which she left by the side door and entered RS altar from the door by the pujari room entrance and planted herself on the altar railing pushing the men aside. Not one of the men touched her in any way, knowing that there is no way to control such a misbehaved and uncultured person.

On that day, next to me there was a small pocket of 3 young women in between the men. One of them kicked the brahmachari in front of her in the legs from behind. When he angrily whirled around, her two friends grabbed her both arms and pulled her through the men to the back where the women were standing. When I mentioned this to Vaishnava das, he told that many of the brahmacaris were complaining of being pinched and kicked from behind. Even he told me that some women had kept a video camera hidden and pushed and shoved a 16 year old boy trying to get him to react so they could film the alleged manhandling of women. Luckily he understood their motive.

Parvati and her cohorts immediately began an e-mail campaign of distortion and outright lies. Much to the surprise of the management here, Bir Krishna Maharaj sent by e-mail what was alleged to be a directive of the Executive Committee of the GBC. Surprise I say because our own GBC Gopal Krishna Maharaj is the vice chairman of the EC and we were in daily contact with him by phone and he never even mentioned the incident what to speak of any directive. And even more surprising was that such an edict be sent out without first verifying with the temple management or even having the courtesy to ask them what was the actual situation. When Parvati and her cohorts began to photocopy the alleged directive and circulate it, the temple management posted and circulated their own announcement that they had never received any such directive signed by the members of the EC and for the reasons given above doubted that such a directive existed.

In any event Radhanath Swami arrived with 800 devotees from Mumbai and the next day the temple was so crowded even most of the men were unable to approach the front of the altars what to speak of women. Gopal Krishna arrived also and a meeting was held including senior men and women. Everyone agreed that they would meet only if Parvati, who had shown such outrageous misbehavior and flagrant disrespect of the temple authorities, was not invited. The meeting thus went off in a very cordial and respectful manner and it was concluded that in view of the immense crowd that there was indeed a difficulty for the women to take darshan. It was pointed out that the women have exclusive darshan of RS altar during the Guru Puja Kirtan, sandhya artik, and Damodar astakam. It was also pointed out in Bhaktivedanta Manor, the men pay their obeisances in front of all the altars and move to the right side and the ladies occupy the left side of the temple room. Therefore it was mutually agreed to that the men would offer obeisances in front of all the altars and then

occupy the right half of the temple room including RS altar where they have no darshan at any of the other major periods, and the women would occupy the left side of the temple room. This would be in effect at least for the duration of the festival and later subject to review. Let it be known that to this date, Parvati, in obstinate defiance of the management, plants herself in front of the men at the RS altar.

Vaishnava dasanudas,
Deena Bandhu dasa

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