



Understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda's Statements on Rape



Sexual Ethics, Female Psychology,
and the Responsibility to Preserve
a Difficult Text



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Abstract

Few statements in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s published writings have generated more consternation than the concluding sentence of his purport to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.25.41: “Although rape is not legally allowed, it is a fact that a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape.” The sentence can easily be read as a moral defense of sexual assault or as the claim that women generally desire to be raped. Neither reading adequately accounts for Prabhupāda’s wider teaching. He explicitly defined rape as sex without consent, described it as criminal conduct produced by uncontrolled lust, referred to the woman in rape as the victim and sufferer, and contrasted rape with voluntary, reciprocal love. His positive sexual ethic was unusually restrictive and procreative: legitimate intercourse was to be regulated by dharma, directed toward the conception of qualified children, and approached through spiritual preparation associated with garbhādhāna-saṁskāra.

This study therefore treats the controversial statements primarily as claims about lower material sexual psychology rather than prescriptions for sexual conduct. Before turning to the disputed passages, it places them within a śāstric framework in which both men and women display higher and lower conditioned tendencies under sattva, rajas, and tamas. A central distinction runs through the analysis. The Bhāgavatam sentence is grammatically about a woman liking a certain kind of man, whereas the Perth conversation contains the stronger claim that a woman may “sometimes” like rape itself. These claims need not have the same scope. Attraction to male formidability, boldness, dominance, or the capacity to overpower may belong much more broadly to conditioned

female sexuality—perhaps as a latent or dispositional possibility even where it is not presently manifest—while the wish to be overpowered without having to assume full initiative is narrower, and a positive inward response during actual nonconsensual rape is narrower still. Prabhupāda’s word “sometimes” controls that strongest claim. The particular conflicts examined later—uncontrolled lust, attraction to dangerous aggression, divided desire, the wish to preserve innocence while obtaining a desired sexual outcome, and the divergence of outward reluctance from inward erotic inclination—are treated within that framework as rajasic or tamasic possibilities, not as characteristics of women situated in sattva. Traditional texts can speak very sharply about lower female sexuality while, in the same broader tradition, praising women of chastity, self-control, devotion, and spiritual greatness; male lust, aggression, and exploitation are likewise products of conditioned nature rather than virtues. Contemporary research does not directly establish the prevalence of positive response to actual rape, but it does show that attraction, fantasy, bodily arousal, subjective desire, social inhibition, expressed willingness, and consent are distinct psychological categories and can combine in unexpected ways. None of this supplies a rule of conduct for men, nor does it make resistance evidence of consent.

The study finally considers the posthumous removal of the disputed paragraph from the current English Vedabase text and from at least one recent BBT International, Inc. printing. It argues that a difficult passage is better handled through preservation, context, and transparent explanation than by silent deletion after the author’s death.

Contents

1. Introduction: A Difficult Text Must Be Read in a Complete Ethical Framework
2. Śrīla Prabhupāda's Sexual Ethics Must Come First
3. Garbhādhāna-saṁskāra: Conception as a Regulated Religious Act
4. Higher and Lower Human Nature: Guṇa, Sex, and Character
5. Prabhupāda's Explicit Moral Judgment of Rape
6. The Controversial Passages in Context
7. What Did Prabhupāda Mean by "Rape"?
8. Kṣatriya Abduction and the Motif of "Taking" a Woman
9. "Likes a Man" Is Not the Same Proposition as "Likes Being Raped"
10. Male Strength, Formidability, and the Protector-Aggressor Trade-Off
11. The Problem of Distinguishing the Protector from the Aggressor
12. Coercive Sexual Fantasies: A Real Phenomenon with Strict Limits
13. Dominance and Submission: Sex Differences Without Absolutes
14. Popular Culture as Illustration, Not Proof
15. Physiological Arousal Is Not Subjective Desire, and Neither Is Consent
16. "Outwardly" and "Inwardly": Desire, Inhibition, and the Preservation of Innocence
17. Can a Woman "Want to Be Raped"? The Problem of Language
18. Abusive Relationships: Attraction to the Person Is Not Desire for the Abuse

19. The Importance of “Sometimes”
20. What the Science Establishes—and What It Does Not
21. Description Is Not Prescription
22. Graham M. Schweig’s Systematic Interpretation
23. What the Earlier Devotee Explanations Got Right—and Where They Fall Short
24. Why Did Prabhupāda Say It This Way?
25. The Devotee Who Is Shaken by the Passage
26. Preserve the Text or Protect the Reader? A False Choice
27. The Current Removal from Vedabase and the BBT International, Inc. Text
28. Posthumous Editing and Ārṣa-prayoga
29. What a Responsible Annotation Could Say
30. The Strongest Defensible Interpretation of the Evidence as a Whole
31. Conclusion: Why the Statement Can Be Defended

1. Introduction: A Difficult Text Must Be Read in a Complete Ethical Framework

Among the many thousands of pages of books, lectures, conversations, and letters left by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a small number of statements have become exceptionally controversial. Few have caused more understandable concern than the concluding paragraph of his purport to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.25.41, where he states that although rape is not legally permitted, “a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape.” Read in isolation and through ordinary contemporary English, the sentence can sound as if Prabhupāda were excusing sexual assault, claiming that women generally desire it, or giving men reason to disregard a woman’s resistance. If that were his moral teaching, the objection would be serious.

For some readers the difficulty is not merely academic. A devotee may encounter the sentence online, stripped of context and circulated precisely because of its shock value, and ask how a spiritual teacher who taught compassion, purity, responsibility, and self-control could say such a thing. Some will be satisfied by a quick harmonization. Others will not. A person who sees that Prabhupāda himself elsewhere defines rape as sex without consent will quite reasonably reject the explanation that he simply used the word to mean ordinary consensual courtship. If that is the only defense offered, the attempted defense can deepen rather than resolve the crisis.

A serious response should therefore neither suppress the evidence nor demand that the reader abandon moral and intellectual judgment. Two opposite shortcuts should be

avoided. The first says, in effect, “Prabhupāda said it; therefore no difficulty exists.” The second says, “Prabhupāda could never have meant rape in the normal sense; therefore the word must mean something harmless.” Neither approach is adequate. The first fails to interpret. The second is contradicted by part of the evidence.

The method followed here is cumulative. Before asking what Prabhupāda intended by a difficult statement about female psychology, we must establish what he taught normatively about sexual conduct. We must then establish a broader śāstric anthropology: both men and women are conditioned by the three guṇas, and descriptions of lower sexual tendencies must not automatically be turned into definitions of the essential nature of either sex. More specifically, the psychology at issue in the controversial passages must be located where the traditional framework itself places uncontrolled appetite, divided desire, deception, domination, and sexual compulsion: on the rajasic and tamasic side of conditioned life, not as an expression of sattva. Only then should we examine his direct moral judgments about rape; the immediate literary setting of the Fourth Canto passages; his own definition and wider use of the word rape; the older semantic and cultural background of forcible taking and abduction; and finally what modern empirical research can and cannot tell us about attraction, dominance, coercive fantasy, involuntary sexual response, and consent. Only after these categories are distinguished should we attempt a synthesis.

This order matters because descriptive psychology and normative ethics are not the same category, and conditioned psychology is not the same thing as spiritual identity. A teacher can describe lust, aggression, jealousy, criminality, addiction,

or self-destructive desire without prescribing any of them. Attraction to a person is not identical with approval of everything that person does. Fantasy is not identical with real-world preference. Physiological arousal is not identical with consent. Emotional attachment to an abusive partner is not identical with a desire to be abused. Nor should a description of a lower tendency in women be read as though men stand outside the same material psychology: uncontrolled male lust and aggression are themselves central to Prabhupāda's analysis of rape. The guṇas also mix and fluctuate; the point is not to stamp whole persons permanently as "sattvic," "rajasic," or "tamasic," but to identify the quality of a particular tendency. The conflicted and lust-driven psychologies examined below are not being attributed to the higher, sāttvika feminine nature. At the same time, the generic wording "a woman likes a man..." should not be artificially reduced to a claim about a tiny exceptional class. It can reasonably be read as typological or dispositional: a lower tendency may belong to the repertoire of conditioned female sexuality without being consciously active in every individual woman at every time. That broader disposition must then be distinguished from the much narrower claim in Perth that a positive response can extend "sometimes" to rape itself.

The argument developed here is therefore deliberately narrower than either hostile polemics or indiscriminate apologetics. It will not ask the reader to pretend that Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.25.41 is easy for a contemporary audience, nor will it treat our immediate discomfort as proof that Prabhupāda chose his words badly. The thought may naturally occur that the point would have been easier for us had he supplied the qualifications that a contemporary

academic writer would consider indispensable. Yet a follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda should be cautious about converting that first reaction into a judgment upon the teacher. Within the disciplic relationship there is reason to trust that the force of the formulation was not meaningless, even where its precise pedagogical purpose cannot be demonstrated. One possibility is that the very shock of the sentence compels the reader to move beyond polite surface assumptions and examine less comfortable layers of sexual psychology. Nor is it necessary to prove every implication that could be extracted from his words. The task is to distinguish what the evidence actually supports from what it does not.

The distinction is also pastoral. A devotee should not be forced into an artificial choice between conscience and faith. It is legitimate to acknowledge the first reaction: this statement would seem easier if it had been expressed in a less provocative way. But that reaction need not be the final hermeneutical judgment. For a follower, the more faithful question is whether there may have been a purpose in Prabhupāda's choice to speak so forcefully. Perhaps the formulation itself is pedagogical: by refusing to leave us comfortably on the surface, it forces us to ask what he understood about attraction, aggression, desire, bodily response, and the difference between inward psychology and outward conduct. Faith is not strengthened by explanations that collapse under scrutiny, but neither is it strengthened by assuming that our preference for an easier formulation is necessarily wiser than the teacher's rhetorical choice.

2. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Sexual Ethics Must Come First

Any interpretation of Prabhupāda’s remarks about sexual aggression should begin with his positive teaching on sex. His normative sexual ethic was not permissive. It was highly regulated, closely connected with responsibility for procreation, and repeatedly framed as a discipline of desire rather than an opportunity for unrestricted enjoyment. This point is so fundamental that it should be established before the controversial passages are examined in detail.

The theological basis appears directly in Bhagavad-gītā 7.11, where Kṛṣṇa identifies Himself with kāma that is not contrary to dharma: dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo ’smi bharataṣabha. Prabhupāda did not read this as a divine endorsement of sexual desire in general. Throughout his teaching, sexuality becomes legitimate through regulation rather than merely through the presence of desire. Kāma is to be governed by dharma.

The same orientation is reflected in the regulative principle against illicit sex accepted by initiated disciples. “No illicit sex” did not mean that marriage converted every possible erotic impulse into a spiritually recommended act. In a 1969 radio interview in Los Angeles, after explaining that marriage was allowed whereas sex outside marriage was forbidden, Prabhupāda immediately added that “for spiritual advancement” sexual indulgence is always restricted. Asked whether sex was for procreation, he replied that intercourse is recommended “only for good children.” The adjective good matters. He was not merely concerned that intercourse might

biologically produce offspring. He connected sexual conduct with responsibility for the quality, upbringing, and spiritual prospects of the child. (Radio Interview, Los Angeles, February 12, 1969.)

His books make the principle still more explicit. In the purport to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.22.53, describing Pṛthu Mahārāja and Arci, Prabhupāda says their sons were not conceived “whimsically or by accident.” He identifies garbhādhāna-saṁskāra as the purificatory process connected with conception and states that the mental condition of the father and mother before intercourse affects the mentality of the child to be conceived. A child begotten out of lust, he warns, may not develop as the parents desire. He then emphasizes that Pṛthu did not beget his children out of lust or approach his wife merely for sense gratification. (ŚB 4.22.53, purport.)

A parallel passage in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.16.35 discusses the conception of Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu. Prabhupāda notes that Kaśyapa Muni’s mind was disturbed at conception and concludes that one’s mind should be “very sober and devotional” when conceiving a child. He recommends garbhādhāna-saṁskāra and remarks that “the conditions of conception are to be carefully studied,” calling the subject “a very great science.” (ŚB 3.16.35, purport.) Whether one accepts every biological assumption found in traditional discussions is not the issue here. The ethical structure is unmistakable: consciousness, intention, restraint, and responsibility matter before the sexual act takes place.

Prabhupāda translated that principle into practical instructions for his disciples. In a letter to Śyāmā dated

January 18, 1969, he advised that sex be avoided as far as possible and that, if undertaken, it be used for begetting Kṛṣṇa-conscious children. He instructed the husband and wife to chant at least fifty rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra beforehand and mentioned a recommended period in relation to menstruation. The details show that intercourse was not being conceived as spontaneous recreation. It was to be deliberate, spiritually prepared, procreative, and subordinated to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (Letter to Śyāmā, January 18, 1969.)

A later instruction communicated by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami on May 19, 1977, after discussion with Prabhupāda, states that ISKCON gr̥hasthas should “simply chant 50 rounds before conceiving a child.” In the same communication, Prabhupāda is reported as discouraging his Western disciples from attempting to reproduce an elaborate Manu-saṁhitā ritual system for which he did not consider them qualified. That practical simplification should not be turned into the claim that he rejected the broader traditional ideal of garbhādhāna; he repeatedly invoked garbhādhāna approvingly in his books and lectures. Rather, he gave disciples a practicable minimum centered on chanting and conscious procreation. Nothing in the instruction implies that additional appropriate preparation would be intrinsically objectionable. (Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami to Madhusūdana Dāsa, May 19, 1977.)

This background immediately changes the interpretive frame. Prabhupāda was not operating within a modern sexual ethic in which erotic experimentation is presumptively good so long as it is exciting. His positive ideal placed sexual intercourse within marriage, discipline, responsibility, spiritual preparation, and the begetting of qualified children. Modern phenomena such as erotic domination, consensual

non-consent, or sexual role-play may later be relevant as external evidence that certain psychological responses exist. They should never be confused with practices Prabhupāda himself recommended.

3. Garbhādhāna-saṁskāra: Conception as a Regulated Religious Act

Prabhupāda's teaching on conception belongs to a much broader Indian religious tradition in which procreation is treated as a saṁskāra—a formative and purificatory rite—and therefore as something requiring preparation rather than mere impulse. The details vary substantially among dharma texts, gr̥hya traditions, Vaiṣṇava manuals, regional customs, and later jyotiṣa literature. The present argument does not require us to decide which specific calendar rule, ritual gesture, or astrological prescription is universally binding. The important point is the existence and character of the regulatory tradition itself.

Classical Dharmaśāstra already regulates the permissible period for marital intercourse. Manusmṛti 3.45–50, for example, discusses the wife's fertile season, specifies nights that are prohibited or recommended, and treats sexual approach as something subject to rule rather than impulse. Later ritual manuals extend this kind of regulation in different ways. Vaiṣṇava saṁskāra manuals associated with the Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā tradition contain procedures for garbhādhāna, while practical appendices and later manuals may specify auspicious nakṣatras, tithis, weekdays, times of day, and other muhūrta considerations. Some traditions place particular emphasis on ritual purity, prayer, mantra, and the mental condition of the prospective parents; others give detailed astrological rules. The lists do not always agree.

That disagreement is not a problem for our present purpose. We are not writing a manual of garbhādhāna, nor attempting

to establish that one late appendix carries the same authority as an early gr̥hya-sūtra. We are identifying a common conceptual pattern. A married couple intends to conceive. They prepare for the act. Timing can matter. Consciousness matters. Religious discipline matters. The expected child is not treated as an accidental side-effect of erotic recreation.

The degree of regulation can be striking to a modern reader. Some manuals discuss the menstrual cycle, permitted nights, lunar days, nakṣatras, eclipses, festivals, or other auspicious and inauspicious circumstances. The mere fact that such rules were developed shows how far the normative framework stands from the idea of unstructured sexual spontaneity. The prospective parents are not primarily asking how to intensify erotic novelty. They are asking how to receive a child under conditions considered physically, morally, spiritually, and sometimes astrologically favorable.

Prabhupāda's own instructions preserve the central logic even when he greatly simplifies the procedure. His emphasis is on sober consciousness, self-control, deliberate procreation, chanting, and responsibility for the soul who may take birth. The fifty-round instruction therefore makes best sense within that larger framework: it is an accessible Kṛṣṇa-conscious discipline imposed on the act of conception, not a license to treat sexuality as morally unstructured after the chanting is finished.

This traditional framework is directly relevant to the present controversy. A sexual assault is not garbhādhāna-saṁskāra. It does not represent two prospective parents deliberately preparing to bring a child into the world. It does not involve shared spiritual intention or mutual preparation directed

toward the welfare of future offspring. Whatever psychological observations Prabhupāda may have made about attraction to aggressive men or about complicated responses under coercive circumstances, those observations cannot coherently be converted into a recommendation that rape is a Vedic method of intercourse or procreation.

The argument should be stated carefully. It is unnecessary to claim that premodern Sanskrit texts formulate twenty-first-century consent doctrine in contemporary legal language. Modern legal categories should not simply be projected backward into every ancient social form. The narrower proposition is sufficient: Prabhupāda's prescribed ideal of legitimate sexual life is deliberate, disciplined, procreative, and governed by dharma. Rape, which he himself defines as sex without consent, belongs to another moral category. The two cannot reasonably be presented as alternative ways of accomplishing the same religious act.

4. Higher and Lower Human Nature: Guṇa, Sex, and Character

Before turning to Prabhupāda's direct judgments about rape, one further interpretive framework is needed. The discussion concerns women because the disputed statements concern female psychology, but the underlying śāstric anthropology is not a scheme in which women possess a lower nature while men represent the higher. Bhagavad-gītā 14.5 presents sattva, rajas, and tamas as modes of material nature that bind the embodied living being. Men and women alike can be governed by clarity and self-control, by passion and appetite, or by ignorance and destructive impulse. In the present subject, male lust, domination, sexual exploitation, and rape are themselves obvious manifestations of lower conditioned nature. The moral burden of controlling them falls on the man who experiences them.

This point matters because traditional literature sometimes speaks about sexual character in language far sharper than modern readers expect. A particularly relevant example occurs in the Devī-Bhāgavata Purāṇa's account of the meeting of Tulasī and Śaṅkhacūḍa. Tulasī gives a severe description of degraded and highly passionate women. Among the tendencies she describes is a discrepancy between outward presentation and inward sexual inclination: a woman may display chastity or reluctance externally while inward desire remains strong, and may appear extremely modest in public while becoming eager in private with a lover. The passage does not describe rape, and it should not be made to prove more than it says. Its relevance is narrower: the distinction between outward

behavior and inward sexual desire is not an invention created to rescue a modern controversy; it occurs within older traditional discussions of conditioned sexual psychology. (Devī-Bhāgavata Purāṇa 9.18, especially the discussion around vv. 37–39, Swami Vijñanananda trans.)

Crucially, the narrative itself does not leave Tulasī's sweeping language unqualified. Śaṅkhacūḍa replies that what she has said is "partly" true and "partly" false. He distinguishes between women who are praiseworthy and those who are not, names exalted women such as Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Durgā, Sāvitrī, Rādhā, Arundhatī, Devahūti, Anasūyā, and others, and then explicitly classifies female character according to the guṇas. Women of sattva are described as excellent, good, chaste, and praiseworthy; those dominated by rajas are placed in an intermediate category associated with enjoyment and self-interest; those dominated by tamas are described as the lowest. The correction is hermeneutically important. A description of a lower type is not a definition of womanhood. Within this framework, the lust-driven conflict between outward restraint and inward appetite belongs on the rajasic/tamasic side of conditioned sexuality; it is not presented as characteristic of women situated in sattva.

The Mahābhārata preserves the same tension between uncompromising descriptions of lower sexual tendencies and emphatic praise of higher female character. In Anuśāsana-parva 13.38, Nārada asks the apsarā Pañcacūḍā about women's disposition, and she gives an exceptionally negative account of uncontrolled female sexuality. It would be easy to isolate that speech and treat it as the epic's total doctrine of women. Yet elsewhere in the same parva Bhīṣma explicitly says that "both kinds" are found among women, the

virtuous and the non-virtuous, and calls virtuous women “highly blessed” and “the mothers of the universe.”

(Mahābhārata, Anuśāsana-parva 13.38 and 13.43, K. M. Ganguli trans.) The point is not that one passage mechanically cancels another, but that the tradition itself preserves moral and psychological differentiation.

The same differentiation must be maintained for men. The three guṇas are not female categories, and sexual vice is not a female monopoly. A man may be sāttvika, self-controlled, protective, and devoted, or he may be driven by rajas and tamas into lust, manipulation, aggression, and violence. Indeed, when Prabhupāda discusses rape directly, his criticism repeatedly falls on the uncontrolled man: strong kāma can drive him into criminal activity, and human life requires that he restrain the animal impulse. The difficult statements about women therefore cannot reasonably be read against an unspoken background in which men are “the good” sex. Both sexes are conditioned; both can rise; both can fall.

This framework also gives proper weight to the higher feminine nature. Śāstra does not merely append a polite disclaimer after describing female weakness. It presents women of extraordinary chastity, self-control, wisdom, devotion, courage, and spiritual power as paradigmatic. In the Devī-Bhāgavata passage itself, the positive category includes divine and saintly women rather than merely women who are less bad than others. The contrast is therefore qualitative: the conflicted, lust-dominated psychology relevant to the present controversy belongs to passion and ignorance, whereas sattva is associated with clarity, restraint, goodness, and chastity. Lower sexuality is one conditioned possibility; it is not the essence of the woman, still less her eternal spiritual identity.

The interpretive rule that follows is simple but important: the mistake would be to take a description of female sexuality under passion and ignorance and turn it into an essential definition of womanhood. The traditional sources themselves resist that move. Conversely, acknowledging the higher category should not require us to erase descriptions of the lower one. Both belong to the same anthropology of conditioned nature.

This distinction will matter when we reach Prabhupāda's statements about aggression and rape. His generic language may concern real potentials within conditioned female sexuality without thereby describing the present conscious mentality of every woman. A disposition can be dormant, restrained, transformed, or overridden as *guṇa*, *saṁskāra*, character, and spiritual cultivation change. The *guṇas* should not, however, be turned into a deterministic sexual typology. It would be unwarranted to say, for example, that a rajasic or tamasic woman therefore likes rape. Women influenced by the lower modes can differ radically in what they desire, fear, reject, or eroticize. The modes provide a framework for locating lust, internal conflict, domination, and loss of self-command within conditioned consciousness; they do not by themselves predict one specific sexual preference. Nor can any sex-specific lower tendency be made into an eternal property of souls: the *jīva* is not the temporary male or female body, and conditioned living beings pass through different embodied psychologies. Men can display equally degraded sexuality in male form—lust, obsession, domination, exploitation, coercion, and violence—even when its expression is not identical to the female pattern under discussion. The relevant contrast is therefore not good men versus bad

women, but higher and lower consciousness. Within that framework, attraction to a forceful or formidable man may be considerably broader than a wish to be overpowered, and both may be considerably broader than a positive inward response during actual rape. The Tulasī passage gives a traditional precedent for distinguishing outward sexual presentation from inward inclination, while Śaṅkhacūḍa's qualification warns against turning a lower possibility into the definition of womanhood. This is śāstric corroboration of a conceptual possibility, not empirical proof of Prabhupāda's precise claim.

5. Prabhupāda's Explicit Moral Judgment of Rape

The preceding sections already make it highly implausible that Prabhupāda could have regarded rape as a legitimate sexual practice. The conclusion becomes considerably stronger when his direct statements about rape are examined. These passages allow us to establish his normative judgment independently of his controversial claims about female psychology.

In a lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.15 in Los Angeles on August 18, 1972, Prabhupāda contrasts animal impulse with human self-control. Animals act immediately on sexual inclination; a human being who behaves comparably and rapes becomes criminal. His conclusion is that human life is characterized by control, whereas surrender to uncontrolled appetite is animal-like. Whatever rhetorical generalizations he makes elsewhere about women, rape here clearly belongs on the side of degraded, uncontrolled conduct. (ŚB 1.2.15 lecture, Los Angeles, August 18, 1972.)

The judgment is still more explicit in Philadelphia on July 14, 1975. Discussing the bondage produced by lust, anger, and greed, Prabhupāda says that when a man's lust becomes very strong he commits rape and becomes involved in criminal activities. He then cites Bhagavad-gītā 3.37 and identifies kāma as the force that enslaves the conditioned soul. In this analysis, rape is not dharmic virility or a legitimate masculine prerogative. It is a consequence of being controlled by lust. (Morning Walk, Philadelphia, July 14, 1975.)

In Chicago on July 9, 1975, Prabhupāda discusses rape cases and explicitly calls the woman “the sufferer” and “the victim.”

The surrounding conversation includes claims about male and female nature that can be examined separately, but for the narrower question the terminology is important: the raped woman is not described as the beneficiary of an approved sexual act. She is the victim. (Room Conversation after Press Conference, Chicago, July 9, 1975.)

A particularly illuminating statement comes from Washington, D.C., on July 8, 1976. Prabhupāda is discussing the freedom necessary for love. He imagines someone forcing another person to profess love under threat and rejects this as love. “Love is reciprocal, voluntary,” he says; love is “not by force.” He then identifies force with rape. The contrast is conceptually decisive. In Prabhupāda’s own moral vocabulary, rape stands opposed to voluntary, reciprocal loving exchange. (Evening Darśana, Washington, D.C., July 8, 1976.)

Even the Perth conversation of May 11, 1975—the conversation containing his most controversial psychological remarks—returns to the same normative framework. After discussing rape, consent, physical pleasure, and what he calls female psychology, Prabhupāda says the underlying problem is lusty desire. Marriage, he explains, places sexual desire under rules and regulation; without such regulation a man may “commit rapes in so many ways.” The discussion then turns to tapasya and restraint of sexual desire. Whatever precisely he intended by the earlier psychological remarks, rape appears in the same conversation as something regulation is meant to prevent. (Morning Walk, Perth, May 11, 1975.)

Taken together, these passages establish a coherent normative pattern. Rape is associated with criminality, uncontrolled kāma, the collapse of human self-restraint, victimization, and

force as opposed to reciprocal love. No responsible interpretation of ŚB 4.25.41 can simply disregard this body of evidence. It does not make the difficult sentence disappear. It does something more useful: it narrows the legitimate interpretive question. The issue is no longer whether Prabhupāda regarded rape as acceptable. The evidence indicates that he did not. The question is what he believed about material sexual attraction and female psychology that caused him to make the statements now under controversy.

6. The Controversial Passages in Context

We can now turn to the texts themselves without beginning from the false premise that Prabhupāda is recommending the conduct he describes. The most famous passage occurs in the purport to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.25.41. In the narrative, the woman encountered by King Purañjana expresses her attraction to him: “O my dear hero, who in this world will not accept a husband like you? You are so famous, so magnanimous, so beautiful and so easily gotten.” Prabhupāda’s purport first discusses the husband as attractive and generous in the eyes of a wife and then concludes with the disputed paragraph:

“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.” (ŚB 4.25.41, original purport.)

The immediately following verse continues the vocabulary of strength and aggression. The woman asks Purañjana to place upon her his powerful arms, whose “aggressive mercy” relieves distress. In the purport Prabhupāda writes that when a husbandless woman is “attacked by an aggressive man,” she may interpret his action as mercy. The narrative itself is plainly one of mutual attraction: the woman is not depicted as attempting to escape Purañjana, reporting an assault, or rejecting his advances. She is inviting him into a relationship. That immediate literary setting matters because it shows why ideas of attraction, masculine aggression, and being “taken” could come together in Prabhupāda’s commentary.

A related statement appears in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.26.26. There Prabhupāda says that when a woman is “attacked” by a man, whether husband or another man, she may enjoy the attack “being too lusty.” The remainder of the purport is easily forgotten when the controversial sentence is quoted by itself. Prabhupāda immediately turns to the Bhāgavatam’s condemnation of grhamedhī sexual pleasure and criticizes modern society for inducing unrestricted sexual life. The passage is therefore not embedded in an endorsement of aggressive eroticism. It is embedded in a critique of material sexual attraction.

The Perth morning walk of May 11, 1975 is even more important because it prevents an easy lexical escape. A devotee tells Prabhupāda about an English legal issue concerning a defendant who believed a woman had consented. Prabhupāda replies: “Rape means without consent, sex. Otherwise there is no rape.” He then relates a Calcutta court case in which a lawyer induced a woman to acknowledge that she experienced some pleasure during the encounter and successfully used that admission as evidence of consent. Prabhupāda comments that sexual stimulation can produce bodily pleasure whether the act is forced or voluntary. He then makes the stronger and more difficult claim directly: “It is not that the women do not like rape. They like sometimes. They willingly.” He adds that outward displeasure and inward response may differ. (Morning Walk, Perth, May 11, 1975.)

These words should not be softened into something they do not say. Prabhupāda plainly knew that rape can mean sex without consent, and in this conversation he says more than that women may be attracted to bold or dominant men. He says that a positive inward response to actual rape can occur

sometimes. Intellectual honesty requires us to let the claim remain that strong. At the same time, intellectual honesty also requires us not to enlarge it. He does not say that all women like rape, that most women like rape, or that every rape victim experiences such a response. His own qualifier is “sometimes.” An earlier Arsa-Prayoga essay reached the same basic conclusion years ago: the Perth definition makes it impossible to maintain that every use of rape by Prabhupāda refers exclusively to mutually desired forcefulness between lovers, while the qualifier prevents an occasional possibility from being turned into a universal theory of women.

The published Bhāgavatam sentence must also be kept distinct from the stronger Perth wording. In ŚB 4.25.41 the grammatical object of “likes” is a man: “a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape.” The sentence is therefore directly about attraction to a certain kind of man, not grammatically the proposition “a woman likes being raped.” The Perth conversation goes further by explicitly speaking of women “sometimes” liking rape. A responsible interpretation must retain both facts rather than using either one to cancel the other. Prabhupāda’s other statements—that rape is criminal, arises from uncontrolled lust, is opposed to voluntary love, and leaves the woman the victim and sufferer—then establish the ethical boundaries within which the psychological claim must be understood.

The Calcutta court anecdote requires one further distinction. Prabhupāda reports that the lawyer elicited an admission of physical pleasure and then used it to establish consent. That legal inference belongs to the lawyer’s argument in the story. Prabhupāda’s own subsequent observation is different: bodily sexual response may occur under forced stimulation. It would

therefore be incorrect to attribute to him, without qualification, the legal principle “pleasure equals consent.” As we shall see, contemporary psychophysiology makes the distinction particularly important: bodily arousal can occur without subjective desire and certainly without moral or legal consent.

A Text-Critical Question: The Original Dictation

There is one potentially important witness that has not yet been obtained: Prabhupāda’s original dictation for these purports and the first transcription made from it. The existence of such pre-publication stages is not controversial; the specific underlying material for ŚB 4.25.41–42 and the related statement in 4.26.26 is not publicly available. The published text therefore remains the primary evidence, but the original audio or first transcript could still illuminate how closely the controversial wording reflects Prabhupāda’s initial spoken formulation.

This possibility should not be used as an escape route. Until the archival material is actually produced, there is no basis for imagining that Prabhupāda said something milder, used a different word, or was substantially altered by an editor. The authorized published purport must be interpreted as it stands. If the original dictation or first transcription becomes available, however, a comparison would be textually valuable: it could reveal pauses, repetitions, self-corrections, surrounding remarks, or editorial adjustments that are invisible in the polished book. The proper position for now is therefore neither suspicion nor speculation, but an open textual question.

7. What Did Prabhupāda Mean by “Rape”?

The first requirement of responsible interpretation is to accept evidence that resists an easy defense. Prabhupāda’s Perth statement—“Rape means without consent, sex. Otherwise there is no rape”—shows that he understood the ordinary modern meaning. His Washington discussion likewise contrasts voluntary love with force and calls the latter rape. The word in his vocabulary therefore cannot be reduced exclusively to flirtation, seduction, bold courtship, or mutually desired sexual aggression.

This is where several earlier devotee explanations become insufficient if offered as complete solutions. Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami suggested that Prabhupāda was referring to forcefulness by a husband or paramour when a woman might outwardly act reluctant. Urmilā Devī Dāsī reasoned that because something genuinely unwanted cannot simultaneously be “liked,” the word must have another sense. Jayadvaita Swami emphasized the image of a woman preferring a bold, valorous, assertive man who pursues and wins her rather than a timid suitor. Rūpa Vilāsa Prabhu similarly understood the Fourth Canto language as consensual attraction in which aggression and forcefulness are enjoyed by both parties. These readings notice something real in the literary setting: Prabhupāda is certainly speaking about aggression, pursuit, masculine forcefulness, and attraction to the man. But they cannot stand as an exclusive lexical explanation when Prabhupāda himself explicitly defines rape as nonconsensual sex.

At the same time, the older semantic history of the English word should not simply be discarded. Rape ultimately derives, through French, from Latin *rapere*, meaning to seize, carry off, or abduct. Older English uses included forcible seizure and abduction, and related words such as *ravish* retain a semantic history in which forceful taking and intense erotic or emotional transport can overlap. This historical fact does not prove that Prabhupāda intended an obsolete dictionary definition in ŚB 4.25.41. Graham M. Schweig is correct that an archaic lexical definition cannot cancel Prabhupāda's own contemporary use of rape for forced sex. Yet it remains possible that the older field of associations contributed to the way he formulated his point.

Prabhupāda's background makes that possibility more than arbitrary speculation. He was educated in English in colonial India and spent his life reading and translating Sanskrit literature filled with narratives of martial conquest, bride abduction, pursuit, and the forcible overcoming of rivals. His own English presentations sometimes use expressions such as "kidnapped by force," "carried away," "conquered," and "aggressive" in contexts where the woman herself desires the man. The modern reader may therefore hear one sharply bounded criminal category in the word rape, whereas Prabhupāda could have simultaneously associated it with a broader conceptual field of seizure, overpowering, and forcible taking, even while fully understanding its modern legal meaning.

The wording of the disputed paragraph itself suggests such a field. Prabhupāda does not begin by defining a criminal offense. He begins: "A man is always famous for his aggression toward a beautiful woman," and then says that "such

aggression is sometimes considered rape.” That wording is significant. It distinguishes the broader category—male sexual aggression—from the narrower classification of rape. “Sometimes considered rape” does not prove that the classification is mistaken in any particular case, but it does leave open that some conduct in the broader field may be forceful pursuit, taking, or overpowering that some observers would call rape while others would not. Only after introducing that wider field does Prabhupāda say that a woman likes “a man who is very expert at rape.” It is therefore plausible that his thought moves across a spectrum: sexual aggression, forceful pursuit, taking, overpowering, and at the extreme genuinely nonconsensual sex. The Perth conversation prevents us from collapsing the extreme into consensual courtship. The wording “sometimes considered rape” prevents us from assuming that every instance of the aggression contemplated in the purport must itself be rape in the strict sense.

The strongest position is consequently neither “rape did not mean rape” nor “every use of the surrounding language denotes the same strictly defined act.” Prabhupāda knew the ordinary modern definition and could use it directly. Yet in the Bhāgavatam purport he appears to be speaking within a wider conceptual field in which male aggression, seizure, conquest, pursuit, and abduction are adjacent to rape without being identical to it. This broader field is especially important for understanding the unusual expression “very expert at rape.”

8. Kṣatriya Abduction and the Motif of “Taking” a Woman

Prabhupāda repeatedly described forms of kṣatriya marriage in which a princess is carried away by force after combat. Rukmiṇī’s marriage to Kṛṣṇa is the clearest example. In Kṛṣṇa Book, Rukmiṇī—who does not wish to marry Śiśupāla—sends Kṛṣṇa a private message asking Him to come and take her away. Prabhupāda calls the resulting form rākṣasa marriage and explains it as a system “in which the girl is kidnapped by force,” traditionally associated with the martial kṣatriya class. Elsewhere he describes the same episode in terms of fighting, courage, and kidnapping, while emphasizing that Rukmiṇī herself wanted Kṛṣṇa and asked Him to arrange it. (Kṛṣṇa Book, ch. 51; Bhagavad-gītā lecture, London, July 16, 1973.)

The conceptual structure is striking. Externally, a powerful man seizes the princess in front of rival kings and carries her away after overcoming opposition. Internally, the woman has chosen that man and requested the very act that appears forceful to others. The force is largely directed against the social and martial obstacles standing between them, not against her will. Thus outward force and inward willingness are not necessarily opposites in this traditional narrative category.

This is not modern criminal rape, and it should not be represented as such. Rukmiṇī’s desire is explicit before the abduction. The example therefore cannot prove that Prabhupāda’s word rape in ŚB 4.25.41 means consensual abduction. Schweig is right to warn against dragging divine līlā into the discussion as though it were direct evidence for sexual

assault. Nevertheless, the cultural motif remains relevant at a more modest level. It shows that Prabhupāda inhabited a narrative world in which a woman could admire the very man who forcibly “takes” her, because the external violence of the scene and her internal choice concern different objects.

This distinction helps explain the conceptual bridge between masculine aggression and female attraction. A kṣatriya’s ability to fight, defeat rivals, seize an opportunity, and protect what is his can be praised as courage or potency in one context. The same capacity, when detached from dharma and directed against an unwilling victim, becomes coercion or criminal violence. The moral evaluation depends not simply on the abstract existence of force but on purpose, restraint, target, and the will of those involved.

This yields a useful interpretive possibility for ŚB 4.25.41. Prabhupāda may be referring to a masculine type characterized by exceptional assertiveness, aggression, and capacity to overpower. Those traits can be attractive in one expression and deeply dangerous in another. The sentence can therefore be psychologically intelligible without implying that the woman necessarily desires the man’s worst possible act. That interpretation is strengthened by the grammar of the sentence itself.

9. “Likes a Man” Is Not the Same Proposition as “Likes Being Raped”

The most frequently repeated paraphrase of ŚB 4.25.41 is that Prabhupāda taught, “Women like to be raped.” But that is not the proposition he actually wrote. His sentence says that “a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape.” The grammatical object of the verb likes is a man. The phrase “who is very expert at rape” qualifies the man. This does not remove the difficulty, and the generic singular “a woman” can certainly sound broad. But it tells us what the broad statement is broad about: attraction to a kind of man, not necessarily desire for the experience of rape itself.

The propositions “she likes a man who possesses characteristic X” and “she likes having X done to her” are not logically equivalent. A woman may be attracted to fearlessness, strength, sexual confidence, dominance, assertiveness, or the capacity to overpower without wanting those traits directed against her in their most destructive form. Human beings routinely value traits that can become dangerous when carried beyond proper limits. The same distinction allows Prabhupāda’s Bhāgavatam sentence to have a wider scope than his later Perth statement.

A useful three-level distinction follows. At the broadest level is attraction to the man: strength, boldness, dominance, initiative, formidability, or the capacity to prevail. At a narrower level is a desire to be pursued, taken, or overpowered by a desired man, perhaps without having to assume full initiative or openly authorize the encounter. Narrower still is the phenomenon Prabhupāda names in Perth:

a positive inward response occurring during an act he has explicitly defined as rape. These levels can overlap, but they are not identical, and there is no reason to assume that they occur with equal frequency. It is entirely plausible that many more women experience the first than the second, and more the second than the third. Nor should the three levels be mechanically assigned to sattva, rajas, and tamas. The modes influence the quality of consciousness, but they do not allow us to predict that a woman in a particular mode will have a particular sexual response.

The broadest level is also the easiest to understand psychologically. The qualities associated with a man capable of extreme sexual aggression may overlap with qualities attractive for quite different reasons: physical strength, fearlessness, confidence, dominance, willingness to take initiative, ability to prevail in conflict, and capacity to protect. The qualities do not arrive with labels identifying where strength ends and brutality begins. Self-control is often less immediately visible than physical strength or confidence. A man may initially appear decisive and later prove controlling; protective and later possessive; fearless and later reckless; strong enough to defend and later willing to direct that same strength against those closest to him. Attraction to the underlying trait does not entail attraction to its destructive expression. This also suggests why “expert at rape” need not evoke exactly the same attractive feature for every woman. One woman might respond primarily to boldness or initiative, another to formidability or being pursued, another to being overpowered, while another may find the whole pattern repellent. The phrase can describe the man’s capacity; the

woman's response to that capacity can vary with her individual psychology.

None of this gives us a dictionary definition of “expert at rape,” and the phrase should not be forced into one. In ordinary English, “expert at” marks skill, capacity, or effectiveness. In the immediate purport, the object of that expertise appears to lie within the broader field Prabhupāda has just described as aggression toward a beautiful woman, some of which is “sometimes considered rape.” The phrase may therefore characterize a man as highly capable of forceful sexual pursuit, taking, or overpowering without specifying one uniform act or one uniform female preference. For some women, what is attractive may stop at boldness, masculine initiative, strength, or formidability; for others it may include the experience of being pursued or overpowered; and in the still narrower psychology described in Perth, a positive inward response may sometimes coexist even with genuine nonconsent. These possibilities should not be mapped mechanically onto the guṇas, as though every rajasic or tamasic woman liked one of them. Individual conditioned psychologies differ. What the guṇa framework tells us is only that lust-driven, conflicted, or degrading forms of sexuality belong to lower consciousness, not which particular form any given woman will prefer.

10. Male Strength, Formidability, and the Protector-Aggressor Trade-Off

Research on mate preference provides a useful but limited piece of the puzzle. It would be too crude to say that “women want violent men” or that women are generally repelled by any man who is not dominant. Human preferences vary enormously, and long-term partner choice involves many traits: kindness, reliability, intelligence, humor, status, emotional stability, physical attraction, and much else. Nevertheless, there is good evidence that male physical strength and formidability can contribute to attractiveness, and that the capacity for aggression can operate as a double-edged trait.

A particularly relevant line of research concerns what has been called the protector or “bodyguard” hypothesis. Snyder and colleagues (2011) explicitly framed male aggressive dominance and physical formidability as a trade-off. A formidable man may be better able to deter threats and protect a woman and her children, but the same traits can create costs because he may also be more capable of coercion within the relationship. Across three studies of American women, greater fear of crime predicted stronger preferences for long-term mates described as aggressively dominant and physically formidable. The important point is not that aggression is universally attractive. It is that the same cluster of traits can carry both protective benefits and interpersonal risks. (Snyder et al., 2011.)

Later work has continued to investigate this “bodyguard” pattern in mate and friendship preferences. The details and

theoretical interpretation remain open to debate, but the basic problem is intelligible: the capacity to prevail in conflict can be valuable precisely because conflict is dangerous. The ideal is not necessarily an aggressive man; it may be a strong man capable of effective aggression when required and capable of restraining it when not required. The crucial variable is self-control.

This distinction resonates with a traditional martial ethic. A kṣatriya is not ideal because he is harmless. He is ideal because power is subordinated to dharma. The person able to defend the vulnerable must possess capacities that could become destructive in the absence of discipline. Strength without self-control degenerates into brutality; self-control governs the strength that makes protection possible.

Some empirical findings go further. Giebel and colleagues (2013), using vignettes about a returning soldier with high or low “appetitive aggression,” found in a large female sample that the more aggressively described soldier could be preferred for a short-term relationship, though not for a long-term partnership. The study should not be overinterpreted, and its evolutionary account is not necessary for our argument. It nevertheless supplies direct evidence that aggressive characteristics can, under some circumstances, enhance rather than eliminate male sexual attractiveness.

The most useful conclusion is therefore modest. Traits related to strength, dominance, fearlessness, and capacity for aggression can contribute to male attractiveness in some contexts. The same traits can also make a man dangerous when poorly regulated. This evidence bears most directly on the broadest level of Prabhupāda’s wording—“likes a man

who...”—and that level may be considerably more widespread than either a wish to be overpowered or a positive response to actual rape. Consequently, the psychological plausibility of the Bhāgavatam statement does not depend on assuming that large numbers of women desire rape itself.

11. The Problem of Distinguishing the Protector from the Aggressor

The protector-aggressor trade-off suggests a further possibility that should be stated as a hypothesis rather than an established universal law. In real relationships, the traits that make a man appear capable of protection are easier to observe early than the depth of his moral self-control. Physical strength can be seen. Confidence and assertiveness emerge quickly. A willingness to confront rivals may even be socially displayed. Whether the man can govern anger, accept frustration, respect limits, and refuse to exploit power may become fully visible only over time.

This creates the possibility of costly misclassification. A behavior initially interpreted as decisiveness may later appear as compulsive control. Jealousy may initially be mistaken for intense attachment; possessiveness for protection; volatility for passion; fearlessness for courage. The point is not that women are uniquely poor judges of character. Men also choose partners for immediately attractive traits whose costs become visible later. The more specific point is that attraction to strength can sometimes expose a woman to the risk that the man's aggression is insufficiently regulated.

This helps make sense of an otherwise puzzling phenomenon: attachment to or attraction toward a man who is also abusive does not imply that the woman desires the abuse. She may value some qualities in him, depend on the relationship, remember periods of tenderness, fear leaving, hope for change, or remain sexually attracted despite condemning his violence. The psychological object of attachment is the person

and the relationship as a whole, not necessarily the harmful acts within it.

Research on intimate partner violence is complex, and simplistic popular accounts of “trauma bonding” can exceed what the evidence establishes. The classic work of Dutton and Painter (1993) proposed that intermittent maltreatment combined with power imbalance can produce strong attachment, while later systematic work on attachment and partner violence has found heterogeneous results. We should therefore resist turning one theory into a universal explanation. For the present argument, we need only the much less controversial observation that a person can remain emotionally or sexually attached to someone whose conduct she does not want.

That observation is directly relevant to ŚB 4.25.41. Attraction to a dangerous or aggressive man is conceptually distinct from attraction to being harmed. If Prabhupāda’s object is the man—as his grammar says—then the existence of such mixed evaluations matters. It allows us to understand how the sentence can describe a real psychological possibility while still leaving actual sexual assault condemned by his ethical system.

12. Coercive Sexual Fantasies: A Real Phenomenon with Strict Limits

The most directly relevant area of modern research concerns fantasies in which a woman imagines being forced into sexual activity. The terminology itself is difficult. Older scientific literature commonly speaks of “rape fantasies,” while more recent writers may prefer expressions such as forced-sex fantasies or coercive fantasies because fantasy and actual rape are importantly different categories. Whatever terminology is used, the phenomenon is well documented.

Critelli and Bivona’s 2008 review reported that across existing studies approximately 31 to 57 percent of women had experienced fantasies in which they were forced into sex against their will, with roughly 9 to 17 percent reporting such fantasies as frequent or favorite fantasies. The authors emphasized the apparent paradox: the imagined event can be erotic even though the corresponding real-world event would be abhorrent and traumatic. Their review considered a variety of possible explanations rather than reducing the phenomenon to a single cause. (Critelli & Bivona, 2008.)

Bivona and Critelli followed this with a study of 355 female undergraduates using a fantasy checklist and sexual-fantasy log designed around the legal definition of rape. Sixty-two percent reported having experienced such a fantasy. Among the women reporting them, the median frequency was approximately four times per year, while 14 percent reported them at least weekly. Importantly, the fantasies ranged along an erotic-aversive continuum: 45 percent were rated completely erotic, 46 percent contained both erotic and

aversive elements, and 9 percent were completely aversive. (Bivona & Critelli, 2009.)

These results establish something significant but narrow. They demonstrate that the erotic imagination of a substantial subset of women can incorporate force, apparent unwillingness, overpowering, or loss of control. They do not establish that those women want actual rape. Fantasy permits the person imagining the scene to select the man, the circumstances, the intensity, the emotional meaning, and the ending. Even a fantasy about losing control exists within a larger mental environment the fantasizer controls.

This distinction becomes particularly clear in consensual sexual practices sometimes described as “consensual non-consent.” The phrase is deliberately paradoxical: the participants agree at a higher level to a scenario in which one person appears within the scene to be overpowered or to resist. Scholarly analyses of BDSM culture and of popular representations such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* have used the term for the “illusion of suspended consent” within an agreed erotic framework. (Tsaros, 2013.) The apparent refusal within the scene is therefore not equivalent to an actual withdrawal of consent outside that framework.

Prabhupāda would not have approved such practices as part of the sexual life he prescribed for devotees. That must remain explicit. Their relevance here is descriptive only. They demonstrate that the human erotic imagination can render dominance, forced surrender, apparent resistance, or loss of control sexually meaningful even when the person would reject a real assault. In other words, the psychological category is real whether or not one morally approves of its enactment.

This provides partial support for one element of Prabhupāda's observation: outward resistance and inward erotic interest are not logically impossible companions. They can coexist in fantasy and in mutually understood role-play. But that fact does not supply a method for interpreting another person's refusal. Without a prior shared framework, a man cannot infer from resistance that a woman inwardly wants what she outwardly rejects. A psychological possibility is not a rule of conduct.

13. Dominance and Submission: Sex Differences Without Absolutes

A related literature concerns sexual dominance and submission more broadly. Men can be sexually submissive and women can be sexually dominant; there is no categorical division between the sexes. Nevertheless, several studies and reviews have found average sex differences in role preference. A systematic review of BDSM research reported that men in BDSM samples tend more often toward dominant roles while women more often identify as submissive; in some samples as many as three quarters of women identified on the submissive side. The same review notes greater reported interest among women in submissive sexual fantasies. (De Neef et al., 2019.)

A broader scoping review of BDSM-related research found BDSM fantasies to be common in both sexes, with estimates often in the range of 40 to 70 percent, while actual participation was less common. The review also found little support for the older assumption that BDSM interests are in themselves evidence of psychopathology. (Brown et al., 2020.) This matters only descriptively. Prabhupāda's ethical framework would not be derived from the normality or prevalence of a modern sexual preference.

Recent research also warns against treating the observed sex difference as a simple biological constant. Conley and Satz-Kojis (2024) replicated the finding that women reported stronger preferences for submissive sexual fantasies than men, but the sex difference became statistically nonsignificant when age and several sociocultural variables were controlled. Their work therefore supports the existence of a raw average

difference while cautioning against a simple explanation of its origin.

The proper conclusion is consequently restrained: erotic dominance and submission occur in both sexes, but female submission and male dominance appear often enough, and with sufficient average sex asymmetry in several datasets, that a description of women sometimes eroticizing male dominance cannot be dismissed as psychologically unintelligible. It remains false to infer that every woman is submissive, that every man should be dominant, or that submission implies consent to whatever a dominant partner chooses to do.

14. Popular Culture as Illustration, Not Proof

Popular literature and film have long employed a romantic trope in which a physically or socially powerful man takes unusually forceful initiative toward a woman: he seizes her, pulls her close, carries her away, presses her against a wall, or otherwise appears to overwhelm her resistance while the narrative signals to the audience that she desires him. Such scenes would be dangerous evidence if treated as proof of female nature. Fiction is produced within cultural conventions, commercial incentives, and ideological assumptions. Graham Schweig is therefore right to criticize attempts to settle the meaning of Prabhupāda's statement simply by pointing to romance novels or Hollywood.

Nevertheless, popular culture can serve as illustration after the empirical case has been established independently. E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* is an especially visible modern example because the erotic center of the story is explicitly organized around a powerful, controlling male character and a female protagonist negotiating sexual submission. Scholarly discussion of the series has examined its treatment of BDSM, consent, and "consensual non-consent." (Tsaros, 2013; Barker, 2013.) The extraordinary commercial success of the series among a predominantly female readership does not show that women want rape. It does show that fantasies of male dominance, female submission, and controlled loss of power are culturally and erotically intelligible to a large audience.

This distinction bears directly on the central problem. A woman may find the imagined experience of being

overpowered erotic when the man, context, and limits are selected within a safe imaginative frame. The same woman may regard an actual assault by an unwanted man with horror. The category “force” therefore cannot be interpreted psychologically without attending to agent, context, desire, meaning, and control.

For that reason, popular culture belongs at the edge of the argument rather than its foundation. It helps a modern reader recognize a phenomenon that research independently documents. It should not be used to convert fantasy into consent, fiction into universal anthropology, or Prabhupāda’s statement into an endorsement of contemporary erotic practices he himself would reject.

15. Physiological Arousal Is Not Subjective Desire, and Neither Is Consent

The Perth conversation contains another claim that modern research allows us to analyze more precisely. Prabhupāda says that sexual stimulation can produce physical pleasure whether the sexual act is voluntary or forced. In the Calcutta case he recounts, the woman's acknowledgment of pleasure was used by the lawyer to argue consent. Modern psychophysiology shows why the bodily observation and the legal inference must be sharply separated.

A 2024 scoping review by Vandervoort and colleagues examined the literature on physiological sexual arousal during nonconsensual sex. After screening nearly 14,000 reports, the authors identified a small body of relevant evidence involving 136 male and 250 female survivors. The literature was too heterogeneous to establish how often such responses occur or under what precise circumstances, but it did establish that genital responses—including lubrication, erection, ejaculation, or orgasm—can occur during nonconsensual sex. (Vandervoort et al., 2024.)

The phenomenon is consistent with a broader psychophysiological literature showing that genital response and subjective experience do not perfectly coincide. Chivers and colleagues' 2010 meta-analysis of 132 laboratory studies, including 2,505 women and 1,918 men, found a substantially lower correlation between self-reported and genital arousal among women than among men. Genital response is therefore

not a transparent meter of conscious desire, even in ordinary laboratory contexts. (Chivers et al., 2010.)

This yields an ethically crucial distinction. A bodily response to sexual stimulation does not create consent. A person may experience lubrication, erection, orgasm, or other involuntary sexual responses during an act that he or she consciously rejects. Such responses do not retroactively transform an assault into a voluntary encounter, and they should never be used to blame the victim.

With that distinction in place, one aspect of Prabhupāda's Perth observation appears considerably less strange than it can sound. The body may indeed respond pleasurably under unwanted sexual stimulation. What must not follow is the lawyer's inference in the anecdote that pleasure proves consent. Prabhupāda is recounting that inference; his subsequent physiological analogy concerns response, not a carefully formulated modern theory of consent.

The broader conceptual lesson is fundamental to this entire subject. At least four categories must be kept separate: physiological arousal, subjective sexual desire, attraction to a person, and consent to an act. They often coincide, but they need not. Confusion begins when evidence from one category is treated as proof of another.

16. “Outwardly” and “Inwardly”: Desire, Inhibition, and the Preservation of Innocence

The most disturbing language in the Perth conversation is Prabhupāda’s claim that women may “outwardly” show displeasure while “inwardly” responding differently. If taken as a practical instruction to men, the statement would be dangerous: it could be used to dismiss a woman’s resistance as merely theatrical and to license the belief that the man knows her inward desire better than she does. Nothing in Prabhupāda’s wider ethic justifies that use.

Within the śāstric framework established earlier, the outward/inward distinction is also not entirely isolated. In *Devī-Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 9.18, Tulasī’s description of lower, passion-dominated female sexuality includes precisely the possibility that outward modesty or verbal dismissal may coexist with inward sexual desire. Śaṅkhacūḍa’s reply is equally important: such a description must not be universalized, because women differ according to character and *guṇa*. The parallel does not establish that a woman who resists an actual sexual act secretly wants it, and it does not describe rape. It does, however, show that the possibility of conflict between outward presentation and inward desire belongs to the traditional psychological vocabulary in which Prabhupāda was speaking. In the terms of that same vocabulary, this is a rajasic or tamasic conflict of lower conditioned sexuality, not a description of *sāttvika* womanhood.

At the same time, the psychological configuration he describes is not impossible. Coercive sexual fantasies demonstrate that a person can imagine refusing while finding the scene erotic. Consensual role-play demonstrates that outward resistance can be intentionally incorporated into a mutually understood scenario. People can also experience ambivalence—simultaneous attraction and aversion—toward a person or situation. And physiological arousal can occur in the absence of conscious willingness. Human motivation is not always a single, transparent yes-or-no state.

A further configuration deserves separate attention within that lower, rajasic/tamasic psychology. Desire and expressed permission can diverge not only because of fantasy, ambivalence, or involuntary bodily response, but because a person may have reasons not to occupy the social or moral role of willing initiator. A woman may strongly desire a particular man, a particular type of man, or a particular sexual outcome while simultaneously being unwilling to pursue him, request the encounter, or openly authorize it. Religious conviction, fidelity to a husband, family expectations, fear, sexual shame, modesty, reputation, or her own self-conception can create precisely this conflict. The point is not that such divided motivation belongs to women as women; rather, it is one way lust and inhibition can interact when consciousness is governed by passion or ignorance rather than clarity and self-command.

In such a case there may be a psychological or social interest in preserving a position of innocence. The woman may want the desired event to occur while also wanting to be able to say—to her family, her community, her husband, other observers, or even to herself—that she did not choose or initiate it. This need

not imply a calculated lie. Human beings under the lower modes can be divided against themselves: desire may pull in one direction while identity, duty, shame, fear, or conscience pulls in another. Being “taken” rather than openly choosing can, in some circumstances, allow the sexual outcome to occur without requiring the woman to experience herself as the author of the transgression. That inner division is itself part of the lower conditioned state being analyzed, not an ideal of feminine psychology.

A small research literature has examined one related pattern under the contested label token resistance: saying no to sex while nevertheless intending or desiring the sexual encounter. Muehlenhard and Hollabaugh's 1988 study of 610 undergraduate women reported such experiences and grouped the stated motives into practical, inhibition-related, and manipulative reasons; the authors argued that a sexual double standard could sometimes make such resistance socially intelligible. A later methodological re-examination by Muehlenhard and Rodgers (1998) found that many reported narratives did not satisfy a strict definition of token resistance, that men as well as women can display it, and that the overwhelming majority of people who say no to sex mean no. A cross-cultural study by Sprecher and colleagues (1994) likewise found both token resistance and consent to unwanted sex among men and women in the United States, Russia, and Japan, with substantial cultural variation. The relevance here is therefore the existence of a possible divergence between private desire and outward sexual communication, not any claim that such divergence is common, uniquely female, or safe to presume.

These studies cannot tell us how often such a configuration occurred in Vedic or later Hindu societies. Still, a culture that strongly restricts sexual initiative, especially outside marriage, supplies an intelligible setting in which desire and public permission may pull apart. The same basic conflict can occur in a modern setting: for example, in a married woman whose desire conflicts with fidelity and reputation, or in a woman whose fear or inhibition prevents her from pursuing a man she desires. This is a contextual possibility, not a historical prevalence claim. Nor does locating the conflict in a religious society make it spiritually elevated: within the *guṇa*-based framework used here, the conflict arises because lower desire remains active while *dharma*, conscience, fear, or social restraint inhibits its expression.

Nor should a desire to be “taken” be confused with a desire to be beaten, strangled, injured, terrorized, or indiscriminately assaulted. Being overpowered by a desired man and being violently harmed are psychologically different possibilities. The wording of ŚB 4.25.41 is noteworthy in this respect because the grammatical object of “likes” is the man: “a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape.” The adjective “expert” may invite attention to the man’s manner and capacity rather than to injury as such, but the text does not define what that expertise consists of. It would therefore be speculative to build tenderness, restraint, or any other particular technique into the word. The safer point is narrower: Prabhupāda’s sentence focuses on attraction to a particular kind of forceful man, not on a woman’s abstract attraction to suffering or bodily harm.

The moral problem is epistemic as much as psychological: another person does not have direct access to that inner

complexity. If two adults have explicitly established a role-playing framework, they may understand that certain apparent forms of resistance are part of the scenario, along with agreed limits and ways to stop it. Without such a shared understanding, however, a man cannot safely assume that a woman's refusal conceals desire. The very existence of ambiguous or contradictory psychology makes guessing more dangerous, not less.

This can be stated as a principle: a psychological possibility is not a rule of conduct. From the proposition "some women sometimes experience inward desire while displaying outward resistance" it does not follow that "when this woman resists, I may assume she desires it." That inference commits a straightforward error from possibility to presumption. The ethical agent must respond to the accessible evidence of the other person's will rather than to a speculative theory about hidden desire.

This distinction is especially important because a quotation from an ācārya should never be turned into an excuse for abuse. Prabhupāda's own description of rape as criminal, lust-driven, and opposed to voluntary love makes such an application incompatible with his teaching as a whole.

17. Can a Woman “Want to Be Raped”?

The Problem of Language

The phrase “want to be raped” easily collapses several distinct psychological states. If a woman consciously wants a particular man to enact a forceful sexual scenario and explicitly authorizes that arrangement, then—under the definition Prabhupāda himself gives—the encounter is not rape in the relevant sense. What she wants may be an imagined rape scenario, the feeling of being overpowered, or a temporary surrender of control within conditions she has accepted. The erotic content resembles coercion; the interpersonal authorization remains voluntary.

A more difficult category arises when private desire and outward authorization themselves diverge. A woman may want the man and want the sexual outcome while not wanting to ask for it, initiate it, or give the kind of overt permission that would make her unmistakably responsible for choosing it. If consent is understood as interpersonal authorization rather than merely private desire, then desire and consent are not identical categories. Depending on the legal and ethical framework, an encounter may therefore remain nonconsensual from the man’s side because he has not received authorization, even though the woman’s inward state is more complicated than simple aversion. This is the configuration in which preservation of innocence, social reputation, fidelity, religious restraint, shame, fear, or self-conception may become psychologically relevant. In the present argument, however, this is explicitly a lower-mode conflict: desire presses for gratification while other parts of the

person resist owning or authorizing that gratification. It should not be projected onto women whose consciousness is characterized by sattva, chastity, and self-command.

There is also ordinary ambivalence. A person can want and not want different aspects of the same event at different psychological levels. She may be attracted to the man yet reject a particular act; feel curiosity and fear simultaneously; experience bodily arousal without choosing the encounter; or later assign some positive meaning to an event she did not consent to. At this point a basic distinction is essential. In the sense Prabhupāda himself gives in Perth, rape is defined by the absence of consent; it is not defined by the presence of beating, strangulation, weapons, explicit threats, humiliation, or serious bodily injury. Such violence may accompany rape, sometimes horrifically, but rape can also occur without it. Consequently, a positive response to some aspect of a nonconsensual sexual encounter cannot be inflated into a desire for brutality. A woman might respond to the man, to being physically overpowered, or to the sexual stimulation while having no desire whatever to be beaten, terrorized, humiliated, strangled, or injured. Even within one encounter, attraction, arousal, fear, pain, aversion, and nonconsent can coexist rather than forming one unitary reaction.

For this reason, the slogan “some women want rape” should be avoided unless immediately qualified. It is too imprecise to do analytical work. Better formulations distinguish the relevant possibilities: some women have erotic fantasies of forced sex; some are attracted to highly dominant or aggressive men; some experience mixed attraction and aversion; some may desire a particular man or sexual outcome while being inhibited from openly authorizing it; some show involuntary

bodily arousal during unwanted stimulation; and some remain attached to partners who abuse them. None of those propositions is equivalent to the claim that women generally desire actual sexual assault.

Prabhupāda's wording in ŚB 4.25.41 is compatible with these distinctions because the sentence concerns liking a man. The Perth wording goes further and cannot be reduced to grammar: after defining rape as sex without consent, he says that women may "sometimes" like it and speaks of an inward response differing from outward displeasure. We should not retreat from that stronger claim, but neither should "like rape" be expanded into "like every form or feature of rape." Since nonconsent, rather than additional brutality, is what defines rape in Prabhupāda's own formulation, the statement does not by itself say anything about enjoying beating, injury, humiliation, terror, or other forms of violence that may or may not accompany a rape. The interpretive question is narrower: under what circumstances can attraction to the man, response to dominance or overpowering, bodily pleasure, inhibition, ambivalence, and lack of consent coexist?

18. Abusive Relationships: Attraction to the Person Is Not Desire for the Abuse

The distinction between attraction to a person and desire for a harmful act can also be seen in abusive relationships. People sometimes remain emotionally, sexually, or economically attached to partners who mistreat them. Such attachment may be shaped by many factors: love for other aspects of the partner, dependence, fear, children, social isolation, hope that the abuse will stop, intermittent periods of tenderness, or the practical difficulty of leaving. No single theory explains every case.

Dutton and Painter's influential 1993 work proposed that power imbalance combined with intermittent maltreatment can contribute to strong attachment in battered women, a phenomenon often discussed under the heading of traumatic bonding. Later reviews of attachment and intimate partner violence have found a more complicated and heterogeneous literature, so the concept should not be invoked as a universal mechanism. The secure conclusion is narrower: attachment to an abusive partner exists, and the existence of that attachment does not mean the victim desires the abuse. (Dutton & Painter, 1993; Velotti et al., 2018.)

This is useful for understanding the logic of “likes a man who...” A person is not reducible to a single action or trait. A woman can be strongly attracted to a man who is controlling, jealous, aggressive, or violent while simultaneously wishing that he were none of those things. She may initially have been attracted to confidence, intensity, courage, strength, or protectiveness and only later experience the dangerous side of

the same personality. To say that she likes him does not establish that she likes being harmed by him.

This interpretation should not be romanticized. Actual abusive relationships cause serious harm, and the existence of continued attachment is not evidence that the abuse is secretly welcome. It does, however, demonstrate that human attraction can coexist with moral rejection, fear, and suffering. The apparent contradiction in Prabhupāda's sentence therefore has real psychological analogues without requiring the conclusion that the victim positively desires the assault itself.

19. The Importance of “Sometimes”

The published purport uses a generic expression: “a woman likes a man...” In English, generic singulars often describe a perceived type, disposition, or tendency rather than a logically quantified statement about every individual. We should therefore neither flatten the wording into “only a few unusual women” nor inflate it into “every woman consciously has this desire.” The sentence can naturally be read as a broad statement about a potential feature of conditioned female sexuality: attraction to a man whose forcefulness, initiative, strength, dominance, or capacity to overpower has an erotic charge. But the exact object of attraction need not be uniform from woman to woman, and the *guṇas* do not supply a simple formula by which a rajasic or tamasic woman can be predicted to like rape. Individual psychology remains individual.

The Perth conversation then moves to a stronger and narrower proposition. After defining rape as sex without consent, Prabhupāda says that women may “sometimes” like it. We should be exact about what that word does and does not establish. Sometimes is not a statistic, but its ordinary force is plainly limiting and occasional. It qualifies the stronger phenomenon—the positive response to rape itself. Yet “rape” here should not be unconsciously filled out with every possible form of accompanying brutality. An act can be rape because consent is absent even when there is no beating, strangulation, weapon, explicit threat, humiliation, or serious injury. Conversely, some rapes do include such additional violence. These are morally serious aggravating features, but they are not what makes the act rape in Prabhupāda’s own definition. Therefore his statement that a woman may “sometimes” like

rape cannot legitimately be turned into the claim that she likes being beaten, terrorized, humiliated, or injured. Nor does it imply that the same woman would respond positively to every nonconsensual encounter.

The distinction can therefore be expressed as a scale of increasing psychological extremity. Attraction to a forceful or formidable man may be relatively broad. Wanting such a man to take over the initiative, or even wanting to be overpowered by him, is a narrower possibility. A positive inward response during an actually nonconsensual encounter is narrower still and is the level to which Prabhupāda attaches “sometimes.” Modern research gives substantial support to several components across this scale: some women are attracted to formidable or aggressively dominant men; some eroticize submission or coercive fantasy; some experience a divergence between private desire and outward sexual communication; and involuntary genital response can occur during nonconsensual sex. These findings do not directly measure how often women positively experience actual rape, and they should not be presented as though they do.

The word “sometimes” thus provides a genuine hermeneutical control without forcing all of Prabhupāda’s statements into the same scope. It allows the Bhāgavatam generalization to retain its breadth as a statement about attraction to a certain kind of man, while preventing the Perth observation from being universalized into the claim that women normally or mostly like being raped. The broader tendency and the narrower manifestation belong to the same lower rajasic/tamasic field of conditioned sexuality, but they should not be treated as numerically or psychologically identical.

20. What the Science Establishes—and What It Does Not

At this stage it is useful to pause and separate the empirical conclusions according to their strength. The aim should not be to search modern journals for anything that can be recruited to “prove Prabhupāda.” Such an exercise would be apologetic cherry-picking rather than serious inquiry. The proper question is which elements of the psychological picture are independently supported, which remain plausible but indirect, and which go beyond the evidence.

First, coercive or forced-sex fantasies among women are well documented. The prevalence estimates vary according to definitions and samples, but the phenomenon is neither rare nor invented for apologetic purposes. Research also shows that such fantasies can be experienced as strongly erotic, strongly aversive, or a mixture of both. This supports the proposition that imagined force and erotic response can coexist. It does not support the proposition that the fantasizer wants an actual rape to occur. (Critelli & Bivona, 2008; Bivona & Critelli, 2009.)

Second, dominance and submission are real dimensions of sexual fantasy and behavior. Both occur in both sexes, but several studies and reviews find average differences in which women more often report submissive interests and men more often dominant ones. Sociocultural variables may account for some or much of the difference, and no individual woman’s preferences can be inferred from her sex. Nevertheless, erotic female response to male dominance is an empirically recognizable pattern rather than an unintelligible stereotype. (De Neef et al., 2019; Conley & Satz-Kojis, 2024.)

Third, male strength and formidability can contribute to attractiveness, while aggressive formidability carries both potential benefits and risks. Research explicitly models the same man as potentially both protector and coercer. This supports the plausibility of attraction to traits whose uncontrolled expression could become dangerous. It does not establish that rape itself is attractive, nor that the most violent men are generally preferred. (Snyder et al., 2011; Giebel et al., 2013.)

Fourth, genital sexual response can occur during nonconsensual sex, and bodily arousal does not perfectly track subjective arousal. This gives direct empirical support to Prabhupāda's observation that forced sexual stimulation can produce physical pleasure or response. It simultaneously refutes any inference that such response constitutes consent. (Chivers et al., 2010; Vandervoort et al., 2024.)

Fifth, attraction and attachment can coexist with abuse. This supports the logical distinction between liking a person and liking everything that person does. The mechanisms are heterogeneous, and simplistic explanations such as "she stays because she likes violence" are not warranted. The fact of attachment therefore strengthens the grammatical point without blaming the victim.

Sixth, research on so-called token resistance establishes a narrower but directly relevant point: private desire and outward sexual communication can sometimes diverge. Early work reported instances in which participants said no while intending intercourse and identified inhibition and social considerations among the motives. Later work sharply qualified prevalence estimates, found the phenomenon in men

as well as women, and concluded that the overwhelming majority of refusals are genuine refusals. Cross-cultural findings also suggest that sexual scripts and cultural norms affect how desire and willingness are communicated. The defensible conclusion is therefore existential rather than statistical: such divergence can occur, but it is neither a general rule about women nor a basis for interpreting any particular refusal as concealed consent. (Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; Sprecher et al., 1994.)

What the science does not establish is equally important. It does not show that women generally want actual rape, and the studies reviewed here do not directly tell us what proportion of rape victims positively desire or “like” the assault itself. It does not show that a woman’s verbal or physical resistance should be interpreted as hidden sexual consent. The literature on token resistance is especially unsuitable for that inference: later methodological work emphasizes that the overwhelming majority of people who say no mean no. Nor does the research show that rape fantasies reveal a wish to experience real assault, that every attraction to a strong man originates in a desire for protection, or that female attraction to dominance is biologically fixed. Modern research can test components of Prabhupāda’s psychological picture; it should not be made to say more than the data say.

The strongest empirically defensible synthesis is therefore three-tiered. First, attraction to male strength, formidability, dominance, and capacity for aggression is a recognizable pattern and bears directly on Prabhupāda’s broad formulation that “a woman likes a man who...”. Second, a narrower range of phenomena—coercive fantasy, erotic submission, desire to surrender initiative, and documented divergence between

private desire and outward sexual communication—shows how attraction to the man can sometimes move toward a wish to be taken or overpowered without the woman occupying the role of explicit initiator. Third, Prabhupāda himself makes the stronger claim that a positive inward response may sometimes occur even in what he calls rape. Modern research renders this third claim psychologically less paradoxical by establishing several of its component mechanisms, but the studies reviewed here do not quantify the prevalence of that complete phenomenon. Throughout, the *guṇa* framework remains essential: these are possibilities of lower conditioned sexuality, not the psychology of women in *sattva* and not the essence of womanhood. Nor do they create ethical permission for sexual force.

21. Description Is Not Prescription

The distinction between description and prescription should now be impossible to miss. Prabhupāda frequently describes material psychology in terms he regards as degraded. He describes greed without recommending greed, intoxication without recommending intoxication, envy without recommending envy, and lust without recommending lust. His claim that conditioned sexual attraction can descend into aggression belongs within that broader mode of analysis.

This is especially clear in the Fourth Canto material itself. The Purañjana narrative is an allegory of conditioned consciousness. Prabhupāda's comments repeatedly reduce worldly romance to the operation of lust and sexual satisfaction. In ŚB 4.26.26, immediately after the controversial discussion of aggressive "attack," he turns to the gr̥hamedhī's low sexual happiness and criticizes unrestricted sex. The psychology described is part of bondage, not part of his positive sādhana.

The contrast with garbhādhāna makes the point even sharper. Prabhupāda's recommended sexual life is deliberately regulated toward procreation in sober and devotional consciousness. Modern examples of dominance, submission, or coercive fantasy may help us understand what sorts of desires can exist in conditioned psychology. They cannot be imported back into Prabhupāda's ethics as approved modes of marital entertainment. His interest in describing a desire does not imply that devotees should cultivate it.

This also resolves a common logical error in discussions of consent. Even if Prabhupāda is correct that some women

sometimes have inward responses not evident from outward behavior, a man is not thereby authorized to act on a guess about those responses. Prabhupāda's normative teaching requires control of the man's own lust, not confidence in his ability to read a woman's hidden mind. The ethical burden falls on self-restraint.

The point can be stated in a single maxim: a psychological possibility is not a rule of conduct. The first proposition can be maintained without conceding the second.

22. Graham M. Schweig's Systematic Interpretation

Graham M. Schweig (Garuḍa Dāsa) has produced the most substantial published attempt to interpret the disputed sentence systematically. His essay, “From the Darkness of Lust to the Light of Love: Interpreting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Challenging Passage on ‘Rape,’” is important because it refuses the easiest apologetic strategy. Schweig explicitly criticizes attempts to resolve the sentence merely through Prabhupāda’s personal character, stereotypes of women, popular culture, archaic lexical definitions, or casual appeals to scriptural narratives. He insists that Prabhupāda knew the contemporary meaning of rape and that interpretation should begin by taking the published words seriously. (Schweig, “From the Darkness of Lust to the Light of Love.”)

Schweig organizes his analysis through the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā sequence he identifies as viniyoga-vidhi: direct meaning (śruti), implication (liṅga), sentence (vākya), larger context (prakaraṇa), location within the author’s whole teaching (sthāna), and a concluding declaration of meaning (samākhyā). Whatever one thinks about the precise application of Mīmāṃsā categories here, the methodological strength is obvious. A difficult sentence should not be interpreted in isolation from its syntax, paragraph, chapter, neighboring passages, and the author’s overall teaching.

Several of Schweig’s conclusions overlap closely with the analysis developed here. He emphasizes the grammar: Prabhupāda says “a woman likes a man,” not simply “women like to be raped.” He notes that the sentence itself says rape is

legally prohibited and uses Prabhupāda's recorded conversations to demonstrate that he understood rape as forced sex. Most importantly, he places the statement within Prabhupāda's wider distinction between lust and love and cites the Washington statement that genuine love is reciprocal and voluntary rather than forced. In this respect Schweig supplies a valuable theological frame: the dark possibilities of material lust should be interpreted in light of Prabhupāda's larger project of moving human beings toward selfless love.

Where the present analysis differs is mainly in the final psychological reconstruction. Schweig proposes an annotation describing "persons who are addicted to being sexually violated" and persons addicted to violating others. The surrounding discussion of material sexual addiction certainly supports his general emphasis on degraded lust. Yet the specific idea of an addiction to being sexually violated seems to go beyond what Prabhupāda explicitly says and beyond what is required to make sense of the evidence. It risks replacing one difficult generalization with a more psychiatric-sounding interpretation that has not itself been established.

A more modest model is sufficient. Some women can be attracted to aggressive or formidable men; some can eroticize coercive fantasy; bodily response can occur under unwanted stimulation; attraction can coexist with abuse; and human desires can be internally ambivalent. These empirically documented phenomena provide a less speculative route to the conclusion that Prabhupāda was describing a dark and contradictory region of material sexual psychology. We do not need to diagnose the woman as addicted to violation in order to understand how attraction and danger can coexist.

Schweig's larger methodological conclusion, however, is especially relevant to the publishing question. His solution is contextual illumination—annotation that preserves the original text while giving the reader a framework for understanding it. That approach takes the historical text seriously while recognizing the real possibility of misunderstanding. It is very different from silently making the sentence disappear.

23. What the Earlier Devotee Explanations Got Right—and Where They Fall Short

The earlier explanations by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami, Urmilā Devī Dāsī, Jayadvaita Swami, Rūpa Vilāsa Prabhu, and others should not simply be dismissed because their lexical conclusion is incomplete. They often identify genuine features of the problem that remain useful.

The emphasis on aggressive courtship recognizes the immediate Purañjana context. The discussion is not introduced in a narrative of a woman fleeing an attacker; it emerges in a scene of mutual attraction and then continues through language of “aggressive mercy.” The emphasis on the bold, strong, assertive man also corresponds to real psychological findings about formidability, dominance, and attraction. The appeal to the older meanings of rape and ravish identifies a genuine historical semantic background. And references to heroic abduction correctly recognize a traditional motif in which outward force and inward female choice can coexist.

The problem arises when any one of these observations is turned into an exclusive definition that makes Prabhupāda’s ordinary use of rape disappear. His Perth statement blocks that move. He knew that rape meant sex without consent. His remark that it is not legally allowed in ŚB 4.25.41 itself points toward the criminal meaning. A complete interpretation must therefore be able to hold together the consensual literary setting and the nonconsensual lexical meaning rather than choosing whichever side is easier to defend.

The synthesis proposed here does precisely that. The semantic field around aggressive pursuit, seizure, and abduction helps explain why Prabhupāda moves conceptually from aggression to rape. The grammar “likes a man” directs attention toward the male type rather than only the act. Modern research makes attraction to formidability, coercive fantasy, mixed erotic-aversion, and involuntary response intelligible. Yet rape remains rape when consent is absent, and Prabhupāda’s own ethics condemn it as criminal lust. The earlier explanations therefore contain pieces of the solution without being sufficient by themselves.

24. Why Did Prabhupāda Say It This Way?

For a contemporary reader, the sentence “a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape” is extraordinarily easy to misunderstand. It compresses several distinctions that a modern academic writer would normally make explicit: attraction to a man versus desire for an act; aggression versus criminal coercion; bodily pleasure versus subjective desire; fantasy versus real-world preference; and occasional psychological possibility versus universal female nature. Our first instinct may therefore be to imagine that a more qualified formulation would have made the problem disappear. But clarity is not identical with ease, and a statement's pedagogical purpose cannot be judged solely by how little resistance it creates in the reader.

A follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda has an additional hermeneutical consideration. If one accepts him as one's spiritual teacher, one should begin with a presumption of trust that his striking choice of words was not pointless. That does not require claiming certainty about an intention we cannot prove. It does mean that we should hesitate before deciding that a milder sentence would necessarily have taught the lesson better. Prabhupāda frequently spoke in forceful generalizations, sharp contrasts, and deliberately provocative formulations. Such speech can arrest the listener, disturb settled categories, and force an issue that more cautious language would allow the mind to pass over without serious examination. In the present case, the provocation may itself drive the reader beneath the surface of conventional slogans

about sexuality and into the more difficult questions of dominance, attraction, ambivalence, bodily response, and self-control.

The possibility of deliberate provocation should itself be used cautiously. “He was only exaggerating” cannot become a universal escape hatch whenever a difficult sentence appears, and we should not manufacture a pedagogical intention merely because an interpretation is uncomfortable. The point is narrower. A provocative formulation may be intentionally sharper than the fully qualified proposition one would construct after comparing all of the speaker’s statements on the subject. Here the Perth word “sometimes,” Prabhupāda’s broader sexual ethic, his direct condemnation of rape, and the empirical distinctions surveyed above constrain the meaning. The wording shocks; the wider evidence prevents the shock from being converted into conclusions he did not teach.

A disciple can therefore acknowledge two realities at once. The sentence may initially strike us as something we would have found easier to hear had it been phrased differently; yet our immediate preference for an easier formulation does not establish that a different formulation would have been better. As followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda, our proper starting point is trust that there was purpose in the way he chose to speak, even when that purpose is not immediately transparent to us. We need not pretend to know his precise intention in order to recognize a plausible pedagogical effect: the uncompromising wording refuses to let the reader remain at the surface. It can compel us to distinguish attraction from consent, bodily response from moral permission, outward behavior from inward complexity, masculine strength from uncontrolled aggression, and an occasional psychological possibility from a

general rule about women. What initially appears to make our task harder may be exactly what forces the deeper inquiry.

25. The Devotee Who Is Shaken by the Passage

For some readers, all of the foregoing distinctions may appear overly elaborate. Yet the human problem behind the controversy is very real. A devotee encounters the sentence and thinks, “If my spiritual master believes women secretly want rape, perhaps I cannot trust him.” A bad answer can push such a person further away. Telling the reader merely to have faith leaves the moral objection untouched. Telling the reader that Prabhupāda did not know what rape meant can be disproved in minutes by finding the Perth conversation.

A better response begins by granting everything the evidence actually requires. The wording is disturbing to a contemporary reader. Prabhupāda knew that rape meant nonconsensual sex. He did in fact say that women may “sometimes” like it, and he spoke of outward displeasure coexisting with a different inward response. We should not defend him by pretending he said only that women like confident men. But neither should we inflate “sometimes” into “usually,” “most women,” or “all women.” We then supply the equally necessary context: he condemned rape as criminal lust, called the woman the victim, defined love as voluntary rather than forced, and prescribed a sexual ethic centered on restraint and procreation. The difficult statements are psychological descriptions, not moral endorsements.

The reader can then ask the empirical question instead of the moral one. Are there actually women who eroticize coercion? Yes. Can a woman be attracted to a dominant or aggressive man without wanting to be assaulted? Plainly yes, and

research on formidability and abusive relationships makes the distinction intelligible. Can bodily sexual response occur without consent? Yes. Can outward resistance and inward erotic interest coexist in fantasy or agreed role-play? Yes. Do any of these facts mean that a man may ignore resistance? No.

This sequence does not make every phrase easy, but it changes the intellectual situation. The devotee is no longer being asked either to deny Prabhupāda's actual words or to believe that rape is good or that "no means yes." The reader is being asked to consider the claim Prabhupāda actually makes: in some cases female sexual psychology may contain a positive inward response even in relation to an encounter classified as rape, while the act remains morally condemned and while no man is entitled to presume such hidden willingness. That is a much narrower claim than a universal statement about women, but it is also stronger than the merely grammatical observation that women can like dominant men.

That is a claim one may investigate, qualify, and debate without abandoning Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is also a claim for which modern research provides substantial partial support. The spiritual crisis often arises because the controversial sentence is allowed to carry conclusions that neither Prabhupāda's ethics nor the empirical evidence requires.

26. Preserve the Text or Protect the Reader? A False Choice

Once a difficult passage is understood, a separate question arises: what should a publisher do with it? Preservation and pastoral responsibility are often presented as competing values. They need not be. A historical text can be preserved exactly while readers are also given responsible information about context, parallel statements, terminology, and interpretive difficulties. An introduction, endnote, appendix, or separately identifiable commentary can protect the reader from a predictable misreading without pretending that the author wrote something he did not write.

This distinction is especially important in a spiritual tradition. If a publisher silently alters a controversial sentence, future readers lose the ability to distinguish the teacher's words from the institution's later judgment about those words. If, by contrast, the original is preserved and an explanatory note is clearly marked as later commentary, both layers remain transparent. The reader can examine the primary source and the proposed interpretation separately.

The 2008 ISKCON debate over these very passages illustrates the distinction. GBC Resolution 311 acknowledged that the statements in ŚB 4.25.41, 4.25.42, and 4.26.26 could be offensive when isolated, could be misunderstood, and had reportedly been used by some devotees as excuses to offend, neglect, or abuse women. The GBC therefore recommended that BBT International, Inc. explain the passages in endnotes or appendices. That resolution did not propose that Prabhupāda's

words be erased. It proposed contextual explanation. (GBC Resolution 311, 2008.)

The trustees of BBT International, Inc. rejected even that intervention within the books. Their 2008 statement is striking in light of subsequent events. They wrote that they did not intend to add, subtract, or change Prabhupāda's statements merely to make controversial passages more acceptable or less vulnerable to misuse, and they urged successors to preserve the books intact. The following year the GBC rescinded Resolution 311 and endorsed the BBT International, Inc. plan for a separate explanatory website. (BBT International, Inc. statement, June 20, 2008; GBC Resolution 306, 2009.)

One may disagree with BBT International, Inc.'s 2008 refusal to add transparent notes. Carefully marked annotation can nevertheless be responsible. But the principle BBT International, Inc. stated was clear: difficult words were not to be subtracted because later readers found them hazardous. Explanation was to remain distinguishable from Prabhupāda's text.

That distinction is preferable to a forced choice between "leave the reader alone with a potentially explosive sentence" and "make the sentence disappear." There is a third option: preserve the text, identify the difficulty, provide the broader evidence, and allow the reader to understand the author rather than a sanitized reconstruction of him.

27. The Current Removal from Vedabase and the BBT International, Inc. Text

As of October 6, 2026, the English Vedabase page for Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.25.41 no longer contains the disputed final paragraph. The purport ends with the sentence, “In this way the woman is the center of all material enjoyment,” after which the page moves on. The older paragraph remains available in original-edition reproductions and archival sources. The omission is therefore directly observable by comparing the current text with earlier editions. (Vedabase.io, ŚB 4.25.41, accessed October 6, 2026.)

A report published by Akincana Gocara on October 3, 2026, adds evidence about the history of the change. According to that report, the paragraph is also absent from a 2024 printing of the BBT International, Inc. eighteen-volume Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The article reproduces photographs of the relevant page and copyright page and reports that the Vedabase administrator forwarded emails in which the BBT International, Inc. copyrights office instructed him in July 2026 to remove the paragraph, followed by a request concerning translations. It also reproduces a message attributed to the Bhaktivedanta Archives conveying a BBT International, Inc. directive to remove the passage from print and digital publications. Because these details come through a secondary report rather than a public explanatory statement from BBT International, Inc. itself, they should be attributed as such. The observable facts are more limited but already significant: the paragraph was present in earlier editions and is absent from

the current English Vedabase and the photographed 2024 printing. (Akincana Gocara, October 3, 2026.)

The historical contrast with BBT International, Inc.'s 2008 statement is difficult to ignore. In 2008 the trustees explicitly rejected adding, subtracting, or changing Prabhupāda's controversial statements to make them more acceptable or less open to misuse. In 2026 the disputed paragraph is in fact absent. Unless there exists authorial authorization not yet produced publicly, the relevant question is no longer simply how to interpret Prabhupāda's sentence. It is also who has the authority to decide, after his departure, that future readers should no longer encounter it in the text bearing his name.

Good intentions cannot settle that question. A later editor may sincerely believe that removing a sentence protects women, protects the public, protects Prabhupāda's reputation, or protects the preaching mission. Those concerns are intelligible. But the same reasoning can justify an indefinite series of posthumous deletions whenever cultural conditions change. Once the principle is accepted that difficult statements may be removed because later custodians believe the author would be better represented without them, the boundary of the author's completed work becomes unstable.

The irony is that silent deletion can itself damage trust. The sentence has been discussed publicly for years. Earlier editions, audio recordings, archived webpages, scholarly discussions, and private libraries continue to exist. A reader who discovers that a controversial passage was removed without an explanatory note may now face two problems rather than one: first the difficult statement, and then the fact that an institution silently altered the historical text.

Transparent preservation is therefore not merely antiquarian conservatism. It can be the more credible pastoral policy.

28. Posthumous Editing and Ārṣa-prayoga

The question is particularly sensitive within a tradition that treats the writings of the ācārya as authoritative. Prabhupāda himself used the expression ārṣa-prayoga when discussing unusual or apparently defective usages in authoritative writings. In a 1972 letter to Maṇḍalī Bhadra he explained that there may be discrepancies in an authority's expression but that such usage is nevertheless accepted. In a 1976 lecture he again invoked ārṣa-prayoga and said of discrepancies in ācāryas' explanations, "It should remain as it is." In a February 27, 1977 room conversation, while discussing correction of an authority, he insisted that one should not become "more learned than the authority" and concluded, "No corrections." These statements require contextual study of their own, but they plainly establish a strong presumption against improving an ācārya's words merely because later readers think they can formulate them better.

That presumption does not mean that every mechanical typo, typesetting accident, or correction directly authorized by Prabhupāda during his lifetime must be treated as sacred. The important distinction is authorial authority. A living author can revise his work, reject an editor's proposal, approve a deletion, clarify what he meant, or restore material removed in error. After his death, those options disappear. The editor's reconstruction of what the author "would have wanted" can no longer be tested by asking him.

This is precisely why controversial passages demand more—not less—textual transparency. If a sentence is difficult,

preserve it and document the difficulty. If there are parallel statements that radically constrain its interpretation, supply them. If modern terminology has changed, explain that. If scholarship proposes competing readings, identify them. But do not solve the hermeneutical problem by altering the primary evidence from which the interpretation must proceed.

In the present case the need for preservation is especially strong because the passage is not meaningless debris. It has generated serious interpretive work, including Schweig's lengthy hermeneutical analysis, earlier devotee explanations, the GBC's 2008 resolution, and scientific questions raised by the passage itself. Removing the paragraph does not reveal what Prabhupāda meant. It merely removes the most difficult datum from the edition most readers are likely to consult.

29. What a Responsible Annotation Could Say

If a publisher or educational institution believes the passage requires immediate contextual help, an annotation can be both concise and honest. It should not attempt to make Prabhupāda say something safer than he said, and it should not introduce speculative psychology as settled fact. It should establish the distinctions most likely to prevent moral misunderstanding.

One possible note would read:

Prabhupāda elsewhere defines rape as sex without consent and describes it as criminal conduct arising from uncontrolled lust. He also contrasts rape with voluntary, reciprocal love. In the present purport the grammatical object of “likes” is the man rather than the act itself. In a later discussion, however, after explicitly defining rape as sex without consent, Prabhupāda states that women may “sometimes” like it. This should neither be concealed nor universalized: he does not say that all or most women do so. Modern research distinguishes attraction, coercive fantasy, physiological arousal, ambivalence, private desire, expressed willingness, and consent; these categories can coexist in complex ways, and in some cases social or psychological inhibition can produce a divergence between inward desire and outward authorization. None of these phenomena by itself constitutes consent to sexual assault, and resistance cannot safely be treated as evidence of hidden willingness. Prabhupāda’s statement is therefore descriptive of material sexual psychology, not permission to disregard a woman’s expressed will.

Such a note does not solve every question. It does something more appropriate for an annotation: it prevents the most serious false inference while directing interested readers toward fuller discussion. The original wording remains available for scrutiny, and the explanatory voice remains visibly separate from the author's.

30. The Strongest Defensible Interpretation of the Evidence as a Whole

The evidence permits a stronger conclusion than mere agnosticism. We do not need to choose between explaining Prabhupāda's words away and admitting that they are simply indefensible. A coherent interpretation is available that preserves the force of his language, fits his wider teaching, and is psychologically plausible.

First, Śrīla Prabhupāda understood rape in the ordinary sense of sex without consent. The Perth definition is explicit, and his Washington discussion identifies force as the feature distinguishing rape from voluntary love. Any interpretation that makes rape exclusively a synonym for consensual aggressive courtship is therefore incomplete.

Second, Prabhupāda did not morally approve rape. He associated it with criminal activity, uncontrolled lust, animal-like failure of restraint, and victimization. His positive sexual ethic was centered on dharma, marriage, restraint, procreation, proper consciousness, and garbhādhāna. Rape is structurally incompatible with that prescribed ideal.

Third, the śāstric framework cautions against turning a description of conditioned female sexuality into a definition of womanhood. Both sexes are subject to sattva, rajas, and tamas. Traditional texts can describe lower female sexual tendencies very sharply while also distinguishing and praising women of higher character; in the Tulasī-Śaṅkhacūḍa dialogue, the very text that describes outward modesty coexisting with inward

desire immediately qualifies the generalization through a hierarchy of guṇa and character. Within that hierarchy, the conflicted, lust-driven psychology relevant to the present controversy belongs to rajas and tamas, not to sattva. At the same time, a lower tendency can be dispositional or latent without being consciously manifest in every individual at every moment. Higher cultivation can restrain, transform, or render such tendencies practically absent. Because the jīva is not the temporary sexed body, no such tendency should be essentialized as an eternal property of a class of souls. Men remain capable of equally degraded sexuality in male form, and the same conditioned consciousness can assume different embodied expressions.

Fourth, the published Bhāgavatam sentence is grammatically about attraction to a man: “a woman likes a man who is very expert at rape.” This is the broadest of the relevant claims. The immediately preceding wording—“such aggression is sometimes considered rape”—suggests that Prabhupāda is operating with a broader field of sexual aggression, forceful pursuit, taking, and overpowering, only some of which is classified as rape. “Expert at rape” can therefore reasonably characterize the man’s capacity within that field without requiring one single behavior or one single female preference. One woman may respond to strength or bold initiative, another to being pursued or overpowered, while another may reject the entire pattern. Such attraction could be considerably more widespread than any wish to experience actual rape. The older semantic field of seizure and abduction, together with kṣatriya narratives in which force and female attraction can coexist, helps explain why aggression, overpowering, and

attractiveness occupy neighboring conceptual space in Prabhupāda's language.

Fifth, the Perth conversation makes the claim stronger but also narrower. Having defined rape as sex without consent, Prabhupāda says that women may "sometimes" like it. We should accept that statement as it stands, but not silently add content to it. It does not follow that women influenced by *rajas* or *tamas* generally like rape, nor that any particular woman in those modes will do so. The *guṇas* locate the phenomenon within lower conditioned psychology when it occurs; they do not predict its occurrence. Nor does "like it" imply approval of every feature of every rape. Rape, in Prabhupāda's own definition, is marked by lack of consent; it need not include beating, strangulation, weapons, explicit threats, humiliation, or serious bodily injury, though any of these may accompany particular rapes. Thus a positive inward response in some nonconsensual encounters does not entail enjoyment of brutality or of every aspect of the event. The most natural synthesis is that the broader attraction to the kind of man described in the *Bhāgavatam* can exist much more widely, while the extreme manifestation—a positive inward response within an actual nonconsensual encounter—occurs only sometimes and under particular conditions.

Sixth, "like" need not name one simple, undivided mental state. Lower conditioned sexuality can contain simultaneous and conflicting components: attraction to the person, erotic response to dominance, bodily pleasure, involuntary arousal, fantasy, fear, aversion, conscious refusal, ambivalent desire, and even a desire for an encounter combined with reluctance to initiate or openly authorize it. In some circumstances social reputation, fidelity, religious restraint, modesty, shame, fear, or

self-conception may give a person an interest in preserving the position that she did not voluntarily choose the act. These states are not interchangeable. In particular, private desire is not identical with communicated consent. This distinction allows Prabhupāda's stronger Perth statement to be taken literally without turning it into the claim that a raped woman therefore consented or that the aggressor acted legitimately. It also keeps the analysis in its proper guṇa context: the divided psychology being described is not the higher sāttvika ideal of female character.

Seventh, contemporary research gives independent support to much of the psychological architecture required by this interpretation. Male strength and formidability can be attractive while simultaneously carrying coercive risk. Some women eroticize dominance or coercive fantasy. Average sex differences in submissive fantasy have repeatedly been reported, though their causes remain disputed. Physiological sexual arousal can occur during unwanted stimulation, emotional attachment can persist toward a person whose conduct is rejected, and a smaller literature on token resistance shows that private desire and outward sexual communication can sometimes diverge under inhibition or social pressures. Later work also makes clear that this phenomenon is not uniquely female and that the overwhelming majority of refusals are genuine. These findings do not directly measure how often a woman has a positive inward response during an actual rape, so they cannot supply a prevalence figure for Prabhupāda's precise claim. But they do show that the combination he describes is psychologically possible rather than incoherent.

Eighth, this psychological possibility has no prescriptive force. Prabhupāda's own moral teaching moves in the opposite direction: control kāma, regulate sexuality, approach conception in proper consciousness, and never confuse force with reciprocal love. Even if an inwardly positive response sometimes coexists with nonconsent, the nonconsent remains decisive for the conduct of the other person. A man cannot infer hidden willingness from resistance merely because such psychological complexity can exist.

Taken together, the most defensible reading is therefore specific and affirmative. Prabhupāda's statements describe a graded field of lower material sexual psychology rather than one single proposition of equal scope. The Bhāgavatam purport first places male aggression in a wider field, saying that "such aggression is sometimes considered rape," and then speaks of a woman liking "a man who is very expert at rape." The unusual phrase is best understood as characterizing the man's capacity for forceful sexual pursuit, taking, or overpowering rather than naming one uniform act to which every woman responds in the same way. At the broadest level, some women may be attracted to strength, dominance, initiative, formidability, or the capacity to prevail. At a narrower level, some may desire to be pursued, taken, or overpowered by a desired man. Narrower still, Prabhupāda says that a positive inward response can "sometimes" occur during an encounter that remains nonconsensual and therefore remains rape. The three levels overlap but are not identical, and there is every reason to expect the first to be more common than the second and the second more common than the third. The modes of nature help identify the moral and psychological quality of lust-driven, divided, or degrading

tendencies when they occur, but they do not provide a deterministic map of female preference. A rajasic or tamasic woman may reject rape entirely; another woman with a different mixture of guṇa, saṁskāra, character, and circumstance may respond differently. The corresponding male side of the same lower consciousness appears in lust, domination, exploitation, coercion, and violence.

31. Conclusion: Why the Statement Can Be Defended

The central question is ultimately not whether Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.25.41 is easy for a modern reader. It plainly is not. The more important question is whether Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement can be defended without changing its meaning, redefining rape into consensual courtship, or denying the stronger remarks he made in Perth. The evidence considered here indicates that it can.

Prabhupāda understood rape as sex without consent. He also condemned rape as criminal conduct arising from uncontrolled lust, described the woman in a rape case as victim and sufferer, and contrasted force with voluntary reciprocal love. His normative sexual teaching was unusually restrictive: sex was to be governed by dharma, disciplined by self-control, connected with responsible procreation, and approached within the purifying ideal of garbhādhāna. There is therefore no coherent basis for reading his controversial remarks as moral approval of sexual assault. Nor is there a basis for turning them into an indictment of women as such. The guṇa-based framework applies to men and women alike: the conflicted sexual psychologies examined in this study belong to rajas and tamas, whereas sattva is associated with restraint, clarity, goodness, and chastity. A lower tendency may exist as a potential of conditioned psychology without being the present mentality of every person. Men likewise possess their own rajasic and tamasic sexual degradations, and no sex-specific pattern is an eternal property of the jīva.

At the same time, the defence cannot stop with saying that Prabhupāda merely meant that some women like confident or dominant men. His published wording sounds broader than a claim about a rare exceptional group, and we should allow that breadth to remain. The crucial point is that the broad proposition is “a woman likes a man who...,” not “a woman likes being raped.” The Perth conversation then supplies a distinct, stronger proposition: after defining rape as nonconsensual sex, Prabhupāda says that women may “sometimes” like it. These two claims should neither be collapsed nor separated completely. The first can describe a comparatively broad or latent attraction to the kind of man he portrays; the second describes a more extreme manifestation that occurs only sometimes.

Once those levels are distinguished, the psychological picture becomes considerably clearer. A woman may be attracted to an aggressive or formidable man without wanting rape. A smaller number may eroticize being pursued, taken, or overpowered by a desired man. A still smaller or more context-dependent group may experience some positive inward component even during an actually nonconsensual encounter. But the category “rape” must not be confused with a catalogue of additional violence. Under Prabhupāda’s own definition, absence of consent is sufficient to make the act rape; beating, strangulation, threats, humiliation, terror, and serious injury are separate features that may or may not be present. A woman could therefore respond positively to the man, to being overpowered, or to the sexual act while strongly rejecting any additional cruelty or injury. None of this changes the moral fact of nonconsent. It simply prevents us from attributing to

Prabhupāda the much stronger and quite different claim that women may enjoy brutalization as such.

Modern research does not directly prove the exact frequency of that complete phenomenon in actual rape, and intellectual honesty requires us to say so. But it independently establishes several of the component phenomena that make Prabhupāda's observation intelligible, including the possibility that inward desire and outward sexual communication can sometimes diverge under conditions of inhibition or social pressure. The token-resistance literature must be used cautiously: later work rejects the stereotype that women generally say no when they mean yes and emphasizes that the overwhelming majority of refusals are genuine. Yet that caution does not erase the narrower point that the divergence can occur. The absence of a precise prevalence study does not make an occasional possibility implausible, especially when Prabhupāda himself limits the claim with "sometimes." The evidence therefore supports a defence of the statement as a limited psychological observation, while leaving the exact frequency open.

This reading also explains why Prabhupāda's forceful wording should not automatically be treated as a defect to be repaired. A follower may initially feel that a softer formulation would have been easier to hear. But easier is not necessarily clearer, more truthful, or more spiritually useful. We need not claim to know with certainty why Prabhupāda chose precisely this language. Yet it is reasonable for his followers to trust that the formulation may have had a purpose: to force attention beyond socially comfortable formulas and into the more difficult layers of desire, aggression, attraction, ambivalence, self-control, and the distinction between inner response and moral permission.

The statement is therefore not defensible because rape is acceptable, nor because women are somehow morally inferior to men. It is defensible because Prabhupāda's wording can be read as describing a graded and individually variable field of conditioned sexual psychology. The phrase "such aggression is sometimes considered rape" shows that the immediate purport begins with a broader category than rape alone. "A man who is very expert at rape" can then describe a forceful sexual capacity whose attractive element may differ from woman to woman: boldness or initiative for one, formidability or overpowering for another, and no attraction at all for another. The stronger Perth claim is different and narrower: a positive inward response may "sometimes" occur even in genuine nonconsent. None of this licenses the formula "rajasic or tamasic women like rape." The guṇas tell us that conflicted, lust-driven, coercive, or degrading sexuality belongs to lower conditioned consciousness when present; they do not dictate the specific preference of every individual. Nor does any of this define sattvic womanhood or the eternal self. The proper response is therefore not to erase Prabhupāda's words, weaken the broad statement into a claim about a tiny exceptional class, or inflate the narrow statement into a doctrine that women generally like rape. It is to preserve the distinctions in the text and interpret them in the light of individual psychology, guṇa, ethics, and the complexity of conditioned desire.

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Note on Terminology

When Prabhupāda's wording and the older research literature are discussed, the term rape is retained for accuracy. In contemporary clinical or research contexts, terms such as nonconsensual sex, sexual assault, coercive sexual fantasy, or forced-sex fantasy may be preferable depending on the phenomenon under discussion. Here, consent refers to voluntary agreement to the sexual act in question; bodily arousal, attraction, fantasy, acquiescence, and emotional attachment are treated as analytically distinct from consent.

About the Author

Ajit Krishna Dasa writes on philosophical, theological, and textual questions within the Krishna conscious tradition, with particular interest in subjects that are difficult, controversial, or easily misunderstood. His approach emphasizes careful reasoning, close attention to primary sources, and the importance of representing Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings accurately rather than reshaping them to accommodate contemporary expectations.

A recurring concern in his work is the preservation of Śrīla Prabhupāda's published teachings and the responsibility of later generations to distinguish faithful explanation from alteration. He is especially interested in how apparently difficult statements can be examined seriously—through context, śāstra, logic, historical evidence, and relevant modern scholarship—without either suppressing the evidence or weakening the philosophical conclusions.

He lives in Denmark and works as a schoolteacher.