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Q What important instructions and leadership examples of Srila Prabhupada do you feel should be preserved and shared for the longevity and solidarity of ISKCON moving into the future?

So I was thinking, most intensive is instructions, because his examples are practically unlimited. But four things come to mind. The **first one**, I think, we have recorded a lot in our society, which is the need for **cooperation**. We see as the movement goes on, it gets progressively larger and more diverse. Different varieties of expressions of Krishna Consciousness come in and it is very very essential to cooperate together. Prabhupada talked about unity in diversity. How the GBC members, specially, and all his leaders, he said, “You come to Mayapur every year for the annual meetings to discuss unity in diversity”. So I think it’s one very important principle.

Another one I think is, it’s very important for us to remember. That’s not quoted or referred to as often, is Prabhupada’s instruction when he was asked by a journalist, “How do we know who are your disciples?” And we know, we can think, Prabhupada could have said so many things. He could have said – well! They are always chanting Hare Krishna mahamantra. He could have said – they are wearing dhotis and sarees. He could have said – they are getting up in the morning. So many things he could have said. In different circumstances, he did say different things. But at least in this one instance, when the reporter asked him, “How do we know who are your followers?” Prabhupada said, “**My followers are perfect gentlemen**” And we can understand, “and Ladies”... “Perfect gentleman and ladies”.

This is a critically important instruction for all members of the Hare Krishna movement today and going into the future, that we don’t fall into the trap that many religious people do by thinking “because I am religious, therefore I am special”, “because I am religious, I can do whatever I want to do”, but Prabhupada said, “No! if you are a follower of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, then you must be a **perfect gentleman or lady**”. So I think that’s the **second one** that is particularly important.

Third one, I think is very critical for us to remember. Prabhupada said that this movement is meant for creating **independently thoughtful** men and women, independently thoughtful. Now, we know, we tend to be apprehensive about this word ‘independent’. Because we are all disciples, we are meant to be dependent upon the shastras, dependent upon our diksha guru and our shiksha gurus and certainly our Founder Acharya. But Prabhupada gave this instruction: Independently thoughtful. So the opposite of that, sometimes we have this term... in leadership training we talk about,

'Yes men'. Somebody creates 'Yes men'. They stand in a line, waiting to be told what to do and they say "yes, yes, yes" without ability to think about things themselves.

Prabhupada said, he wanted independently thoughtful devotees. So that means, leaders should be able to look at a problem or a situation or opportunity and discuss different ways of taking advantage of that opportunity or what are the problems in that opportunity. We should be able to think for ourselves because if we are going to be able to follow in Prabhupada's footsteps, we have to understand his teachings about the importance of spreading Krishna Consciousness around the world.

And that's going to take independent thinking. *Whatever worked yesterday in New York city in 1966, it's not that the exact same thing is going to work today in whatever part of world we are in.* So **we need to understand how to stick to the principles that Prabhupada taught us but understand how to adjust according to time and place.** So the third one is we have to be independently thoughtful, it's an important instruction Prabhupada gave.

And then I had also one that comes from my discipline of communications. In our research just about a year ago, Yudhisthira Govind Prabhu who helps with communications in North India, based in New Delhi, in his research, he found a beautiful quote from Srila Prabhupada from a letter to Tejas Prabhu, I believe. Wherein Prabhupada was explaining that "because we live in the material world, sometimes we need help". We have a tendency to think 'because we are devotees, we don't need help, we will just make it on our own'. But that's not what Prabhupada said.

He said, "Because we live in the material world, sometimes we need help". And he went on to say, "Therefore, you should try to make friends with, cultivate relationships with government ministers". He particularly mentioned government leaders and others, we understand. But he particularly said, "try to make them sympathizers". So I think that's a key instruction, very important principle or teaching that Prabhupada gave us, especially for leaders. **Part of our role is to help other people become sympathizers of our movement, friends of our movement, supporters of our movement.** So that includes influential powerful people throughout the society. Government leaders, religious leaders, leaders in the media, neighbours, certainly our own devotees and the families of devotees, these are all important people. We don't exist in an island; we should help make those people become sympathizers.

Q Do you find any areas of Srila Prabhupada's teachings that have still not been appropriately implemented or aspects of his vision for the mission that are yet to be fulfilled? If so, what could be done to fulfil the same?

Certainly, ISKCON just recently celebrated our 50th Anniversary. We know, it is projected and predicted to grow throughout the world for ten thousand years. So there's

so many things that we haven't fully developed; and that's Ok that we haven't fully developed those things. But two or three things come to my mind.

First of all, I speak from my own discipline, which is communications. As a communications minister, I feel that we have... I must say, **failed to understand most parts of the world**. The need to reach to larger community and to build networks, friendships and supporters, people that share mutual interest with us. There are some countries, for instance, UK or England; I think they have done a much better job than most places, largely because historically their country had no choice. They were put in a difficult situation. The Manor, which is the largest, most important temple in the UK, was threatened with closure and they underwent a more than ten year strategy of building relationships with the government and the environmentalists and with leading religious leaders and political leaders and all kinds of different people to support their efforts. Certainly, other Hindu organizations.

So I think that something has been underdeveloped. There is a need to kind of get out of our walls and to build relationships with people; and that takes maturity. Because not everybody agrees with what we believe in; and that's okay. But there are things that we have in common and we can build relationships based on that. Very important role for leaders... not everybody is going to do this; but if you are a leader and if you are not doing it, I feel you have failed to understand one of Prabhupada's primary instructions. May be I will speak a little more about that.

There's a wonderful story as told in Ranchor Prime's book about Prabhupada in UK. Prabhupada had received an invitation to attend a festival of devotees in New Vrindavan and he wrote to leaders, "Can you cancel this trip?" And the reason he cancelled the trip, he said because Shyamsundar Prabhu had arranged what he described as a gorgeous program, which was really a series of days of meetings with all kinds of VIP's from the society. One was the Youth day, one was... I remember the exact names that Prabhupada used. Academics day, scholars. One was artist's day and the chief guest was going to be George Harrison. One was businessmen day. I think there were about six or seven days. One was Interfaith day, I think Prabhupada called it... So a whole day of meeting with these other leaders of certain areas, Business leaders, religious leaders, youth leaders. And Prabhupada cancelled his itinerary because he wanted to stay there in UK to help this process of building relationships. So I think that's an area we need to focus more.

I think **we certainly need to put more energy in developing, particularly our Grihastha Ashram**. I think the importance of taking full care, balanced care, providing our children with tools to understand how to be happy, well developed devotees; at the same time, according to their natural tendencies, to interact with the world. Some of our kids are going to be Sanyasis, fantastic! Some are going to be doctors, some are going to drive a taxi cabs. That's all fine if Krishna is in the centre. We need to be able to

empower our children to be the best they can be in a healthy, happy family environment, healthy happy community environment so that they can make contributions like that. So those are the things that are primarily important.

And **the third, I would say, working with GBC and its organizational and development issues.** We need to develop better systems and structures for an international organization. We have a huge organization and actually very tiny organized organization behind the organization. So we have a big international community but the organizational structures are not developed. So I think those are the three areas that really need a lot of working. We are speaking to the leaders, please be a part of the solution.

Q Please share some of the personal principles and practices which you have held on to in your journey through ups and downs in various leadership roles in ISKCON.

Sometimes we come down to the level of materialistic people to be successful and sometimes in so doing, we gave up the quality of truthfulness. But I think that the opposite is true. I think that **we are meant to manifest the quality of truthfulness.** Prabhupada said, “the proper king would punish even his son and he will reward his enemy. So he has a sense of integrity and truthfulness”. So I think that's a very very important quality.

We all know that there may be extremely rare circumstances... you know, someone is... you know, my wife's about to give birth and I am driving on a highway and the speed limit is 50 km/hr and may be it's 2 'O'clock in the morning and there's no one on the road and I am going at seventy. So I am not being truthful and breaking the law, but there's a higher purpose that almost any objective person would look and say, “yeah, in that case that was justified”. But sometimes we tend to be a little lazy. It's Kali Yuga and we are not such Sattvik people. But I think that's a very important quality.

And I think the **second** and very important and **I would stress for leaders, is fairness.** If we are leaders, we can't be thinking, ‘these are my men and these are from another camp. These people are followers of my guru; these people are followers of another guru’. These different types of divisions are manifestations of duality. Leaders have to be fair and just. Because when we have to make decisions based on people and problems that have arisen, we cannot err by showing favouritism to anyone; **we have to be absolutely objective, unbiased and fair, and willing to see the pros and cons.** You know, there's always two sides to any problem, any disagreement. As fair as we possibly can, pray to Krishna to make us just and make decisions based on that.

I think, **one personal practice...** I think **all of us need to have at least two or three very close friends who are devotees, who we can take shelter of.** Sometimes

when we go through these difficulties, it's important for us to have someone to call out to and say, "hey! I am suffering here. Are you still there? you know... give me some words of support in this difficult time" we can say all of this. Along with the support, we all need to have some people whom we can completely reveal our minds to. It's the principle of Priti Lakshanam.

There needs to be atleast one or two or three people whom we can call and reveal our minds, "I am having this difficulty, I am having this doubt, I am having this problem with myself or other people. Can you give me some advice?" And sometimes those people offer specific solutions to our problems and other times they are willing to hear us. Just by that listening, that re-strengthens us. But I think if we isolate ourselves, if we don't build atleast a few of those friendships where we can be open and honest and we know that they are going to respect confidentiality, then we get into a problem. So that's something I think is very very important.

In that context I remember back, as devotees sometimes going through some very difficult situations and having friends; sometimes they were seniors, sometimes a little junior officially, sometimes strictly peers. But just having people to give you 'thumbs up', 'you are okay, you are going to make it, it's alright, hang in there'. Just that little bit of enthusiasm from their association is an important thing. So when I think back in terms of principles, for me, having those relationships and being willing to depend upon those relationships and being a little vulnerable and not trying to be a superman.

In ISKCON I have been long enough, that I have read too many of those letters. That's kind of standard form letter. "Dear godbrothers, disciples, friends, I am giving up Krishna Consciousness and here's what I am doing. I didn't have anybody to turn to and I have been in trouble for long time and I have been in pain and I can't stand anymore; I am just going to leave". And those are heartbreaking letters. And I think that each of us as leaders, need to understand that going back to godhead is the toughest task that we are going to face. In millions of lifetimes, this is one of the most difficult, sublime and easy but also the most difficult thing to achieve.

We are going to need all the help that we can get. Let's be a little humble, admit our shortcomings and be ready to take shelter of devotees. Because I know, I pray to Krishna, I don't want to ever write one of those letters. So I think that's a principle we need to stick to. We need help and not be afraid that... have a basic support and reach out to people, they will help us. If you are a leader, If I am a leader, if we think we are in some kind of an island, we will be in trouble.

In fact, in the guru seminar, the spiritual leadership seminar for gurus at the GBC guru services committee put together, **one of the core principles taught there is the need for peer association**. Specially for leaders, the higher you get into the rungs of the institution, there is less people who are officially supposed to give you feedback.

You are in a superior position. Generally, the junior people aren't looking out for the people above them. Maybe they should be, but generally they are not.

So the guru training seminar talks about, when you get that high of a position, there's hardly anybody, just maybe the GBC, above you. If you are a Sanyasi, the Sanyasi ministry is above you to protect you. So where's your shelter? If you don't have a strong base of support as peers then you are risking. Very risky, don't take that risk!

Q Please recount your best and most successful projects (or initiatives) during your tenure as leader / GBC. What were the key success factors in terms of leadership and managerial decisions or approaches which contributed to the success of these projects?

Just a couple, may be they are unique. I don't know if they are my best but a couple of things that I have done with other devotees involved, but I took the leadership on it. One thing was about 1996, which was the 30th anniversary of ISKCON. We started a kind of formal outreach in the west, particularly, in what are called anti-cult organizations. And these are organizations, primarily, of scholars; some are parents of former members of different religious groups, who come together because they found... either they felt their children were harmed by those organizations or they feel the organizations themselves are deceitful or abusive in some way. So we reached out; it's a long story, a colourful story, it's a long one. I won't tell it all.

But we basically reached out to those people and started going to their conferences, dressed as devotees. Literally, I would go to these events, maybe it's two hundred people there. I would go and sit down during a break. And because I would sit down, four people from the table would get up and leave. Because, you know, I would represent one of these nasty organizations to them.

But through developing dialogue with them, we were able to help them understand that actually ISKCON is a unique organization. We certainly made mistakes, some very serious mistakes in our time. And at the same time, we have learnt from those; we are putting systems in place to fix those mistakes and we want to hear from you. Saying to these people- you are our biggest critics. So tell us what you think we are doing wrong... honestly, openly asking those questions. What we were doing wrong, so we can learn from it and not make the same mistakes again.

I will just tell one, kind of, funny story. Mostly these people they are studying groups, like Hare Krsna or this and that. Of course, they look at bigger organizations too. They look at the Church. You know that kind of critiques and everybody. But they look at,

particularly, abuse and misuse of power. But maybe fifth or sixth year I was there, maybe a little longer, about fifth or six. And I came to register and I was checking it with people and I had built good friendships with some of these people.

As I was registering at this big anti-cult International conference, the two people behind the desk said... someone came up and asked them, "we need you to come to take care of some problem". And they gave numerous excuses that "we have to leave". I said, "yeah, No problem!" They said, "do us a favour". I said, "what's that?" They said, "can you stay at the registration desk for us for few minutes?" And I said, "wait a minute! This is an anti-cult conference! I am a Hare Krishna. So many of these people, you know, they are not very comfortable with Hare Krishna." But they said, "No, no, no problem!"

So I just went behind the registration desk and I am sitting there with my shikha and my tilak and my dhoti-kurta. People are walking in and I am saying, "Hello! Welcome to anti-cult conference, may I help you?" You know, registering them, "here's your registration book and the first event is down the hall and... this and that".

So, you know, it's kind of a funny story. But I think it's an example of how, as leaders, *we have to be open about our shortcomings and our problems and also willing to defend ourselves when people are critical*, not in a mood of just being close-minded but open-minded, "okay, here's what we think we are doing, these are the positive contributions that we believe we are making. Please hear us out".

And when you say "there're problems or there have been problems, we want to hear those. Can you help us fix those?" So I think that's a kind of an example; or something I feel, hopefully, Prabhupada is pleased with that.

I think **the key factors** were:

1. **being open-minded**
2. **approaching people** who had gone on international television and told people that we were harmful, dangerous... we are dangerous cult.
3. Being willing to approach them and saying, "you know, I have heard your comments that we are a dangerous cult. let's talk about it. What is it exactly, that we have done, that you feel..." and some may say, "it is apologizing, recognizing...". Since one of the biggest criticism was that these people, more than anyone in the world, there were these serious problems, of child abuse within our organization. So we can't just sweep that under a rug. We have to be able to acknowledge, "yes, in that period of time, we had serious problems of child abuse". As did many organizations around the world, because people didn't know that much the dangers of it. But again, "here's what we have done. here's the systems that we have put in place. Here's how we are trying to fix that problem. You please tell us, how we can do better?"

So that open-mindedness is important. I think it is a leadership quality, being willing to hear from our critiques. Sometimes it is a tendency, "I don't like to hear criticism, I am leader, you shouldn't criticize me". No. **Leader means, we should be ready to hear**

the criticism in a humble mood and then demonstrate to them... ideally, if we are the leader, demonstrate to them how we actually have been doing things for their benefit. And where they disagree and they don't understand, be ready to hear that criticism in a mood of trying to do better. That's what it means to be a leader. We have to be ready.

In that sense to... a little bit of fearlessness. You know, I am not a, particularly, courageous person but walking into these environments where, you know, nine out of ten people think that you are dangerous, think maybe you are a little crazy and you are illogical, you are misleading, you are cheating and maybe you are a cheater. And being able to sit there with them in that kind of environment, knowing how much animosity is directed towards you. But knowing, by Krishna's grace, actually we are doing good things; we are making positive contributions and... we made mistakes. So let's share with people the positive things but be willing to openly analyze the mistakes. Otherwise, how will we do better?

Q Which leadership values should be included in the training for future ISKCON leaders? (Please mention at least three)

In the six day ISKCON leadership course, there's sixteen principles. And I think those are all important. But asking that question now, **I would say there is four**. They are not even in the list of sixteen, I think. Maybe they are indirectly, that I think are more important. Those are the principles devotees ought to take vows to as soon as we get the order mixed up. Because we talk about what we are not going to do, but I think we need to emphasize what we are going to do. So you say, you know, I am not going to take intoxication, not going to eat meat, I am not going to have illicit sex, I am not going to gamble. But I think more important than that is to say: I will be truthful; I will be clean; I will be austere and I will be merciful.

And I think in terms of austerity I think, a more modern word people can understand better, for austerity, is the concept of self discipline. That's really what austerity means, you know, willing to give up sensual gratification for some higher purpose. So self discipline means being able to discipline myself. So the qualities in leaders that we have to prioritize is: are we being truthful? Are we being merciful? Are we making decisions based on what's merciful for other people? What minimizes violence? Spiritual violence, physical violence, emotional violence, intellectual violence. To do no harm to other people, to minimize that.

So being truthful to other people, being merciful to other people, being self disciplined and being clean inside and out. I think I remember as a young devotee, puffed up and quite immature and first one or two times, come in India. As a Brahmachari, we have like a few rupees to spend.

And I can remember, like say in Vrindavan, you see all the widows in Vrindavan.

This shows maybe my own stupidity. But I think it's a good example. You know, twenty rupees my temple president gave me to spend. And I kind of think, if I give a paisa to some of these widows, how will they spend the money?

Then I would see, like the other brahmacharis at the drinks stand, you know, buying a lassi. I would think, so how is the ten rupees to buy a lassi for me because I am brand new Vaishnava. How does that work if there is all these people living in Vrindavan that have hardly enough food, where is the quality of mercy? I was struck with that. As soon as we are devotees, we can think, I am a devotee, my family is a devotee... But you know there is a lot of stories of Prabhupada...

There is one story, Prabhupada was travelling and in airport and devotees, they went with the people. Sometimes outside the airport, you check-in your bags and the man checked in Prabhupada's bags and Prabhupada told his assistant and gave him a tip. And the assistant was kind of shocked. I mean, you know, he is a "non devotee", "karmi", as we used to say... not such a nice word. But how come we give him money? And Prabhupada said, "How else will he support his family?" So you know... **a little bit of common sense and mercy, I think are important qualities.**

So those four... *If we didn't only concentrate on the four 'do not's, and I think, we spend more time in the four do's, as leaders we will be healthy, we will be happy and we will have more balanced communities.* So I start with those four.

Q Which leadership skills should be included in the training for future ISKCON leaders? (Please mention at least three)

Well, certainly in my own discipline having **communications skills** would be essential. Listening skills, public speaking skills, facilitation skills... those kind of things. The broader sense of communications, how to build positive relationships with other communities of people? How to understand other people's needs, interest and concerns?... is essential. Being able to analyze, again in communications discipline, who are the key audiences that can help us or hurt us? So that communications skills are essential.

I think especially, in this day and age, **team building skills are very very important for devotees.** You can't run an organization on your own; you need a team of people who work together cooperatively. And the dynamics... a team doesn't mean that one person is ordering other people what to do? Team means a group of people who share responsibilities, share empowerment, working together cooperatively. I think that's the second one that is really critical.

And then I think, Strategy Planning. To be able to plan effectively. *I think those are the three things: **communication skills, Strategy Planning skills and Team building skills.***

Q Which do you see as the core Strengths of ISKCON which you feel should be preserved for the future generations?

Which do you see as underlying Weaknesses in the way ISKCON is growing and operating today?

Which do you see as the biggest Opportunities which ISKCON should capitalize on in the near future?

Which do you see as the biggest Threats to the movement in the near future?

STRENGTHS: I mean, **our strength, our theology** is unfathomable, it's so beautiful. Our understanding that God is the Supreme person, that He is in everyone's heart, that He never leaves and everyone of us has relationships with Him, that there is no such thing as eternal hell. There's only eternal happiness when we go back to Him. Our theology is: by chanting God's name, everyone can be purified. It is universally profound and transcendental. So that's an unbelievable strength we can never lose.

Our culture is beautifully rich and diverse and joyful. Krishna Himself says that this process is a joyful process. So, culturally and theologically, those definitely are absolute strengths. I think the concept of transformation is an essential one that we have, that we are meant to share with the world. The idea that spiritual practice is not just something you do, it's not a ritual.

It's not just that I am the Temple President; I go to work everyday; or that I am a sadhaka, I go to the temple every morning or I am in some managerial position, But It's... I am giving my life to be transformed. I want my heart to be transformed; I want that everyday chipping away the greed in my heart and the lust... it's a process. I think that's something that's a great strength we have to pass on.

And certainly the teachings of our Founder-Acharya. It's just so profound, so detailed. So... many, many, many strengths!

WEAKNESSES: we have kind of talked about already. I think that **our tendency to be isolated is a weakness.** Our tendency is there and in many communities. We should have less of it because we are practicing Bhakti yoga but I think religious arrogance is a weakness. We have to overcome that tendency to be isolated, tendency to be arrogant.

We absolutely are a global organization beginning with the principle that you are not that body. Yeah, we still have the tendency to ethnic divisions, racial divisions, cultural divisions. To whatever extent those are there in my heart, If I am thinking I am a white and he is a black, If I am thinking I am Bengali and he is Gujarati, If I am thinking I am a man and she is a woman, those are illusions!

That's what our teachings present, that's what our acharyas presented. Prabhupada was so clear that he made black men Sanyasis! He said, "I want every one of my boys

and girls to open a temple". He talked about women that caused such debate in the society. He talked about women taking the role of a guru. He gave a lot of instructions about that. So atleast in principle, we have to understand that there are no barriers and as a weakness if we don't overcome that tendency to see things on a bodily platform then we are just like everyone else.

There's one story. Prabhupada was on an airplane. Some of the passengers were creating a disturbance. Prabhupada's assistant said to the flight attendant, "Can you get them to stop?" Making noise or smoking, whatever they were doing. So the disciple talked to them, they stopped. Few minutes later, they started again. And disciple got up to go and complain and Prabhupada stopped him. And he said, "If you cannot tolerate, what is the difference between them and us?" So, **we have to manifest Krishna Consciousness qualities, not just claim to have them.** So that weakness is there.

OPPORTUNITIES: Opportunities are abound. I mean, such a wonderful philosophy, there are so many opportunities for people at various times. Yoga is very popular now. A few years ago, meditation was very popular. India is becoming popular, vegetarianism... these are all kinds of opportunities. We just have to be open minded and see how to adapt our message according to time, place and circumstances. So I think, the opportunities are profound.

THREATS: I think the biggest threat is in my heart. We often think like that. The biggest threat is what's in my heart that can cause me to abuse my position, misuse my power, exploit people underneath me and if I forget that I am, first and foremost, a servant. In the six day leadership course, one of the principles we talk about is, we have a hierarchy and we all have this tendency to see the problems and the threats above me. We tend to look up and see 'why is it my department head doing this?', 'why isn't the vice president doing that?', 'why isn't the president doing this?', 'why isn't the GBC doing that?'. But that's... anyway we may not have a control over. That's kind of, maybe our area of concern, but it's not an area where we have some influence.

So why spend my time thinking about, 'why doesn't the person above me fix the problems they have? I waste my time and I can't take care of what is within my power. So, now as I am thinking, 'why doesn't the department head above me, prioritize devotee care?' But I have two or three or five or six devotees under me, you all have. Why don't I fix or improve devotee care under me that's within my range of activities. So the threat is, I waste my time thinking about what they ought to be doing instead of you and I doing what we could do to make things better.

Q Please visualise your dream vision for a very successful worldwide ISKCON movement 25 years from now.

What all do you see in that vision?

What do you think we need to do to be able to get there?

What are some of the obstacles / impediments we might face in reaching there?

When I think of that, I think first of the **vision** statements of the communications ministry which in paraphrase is that ISKCON is a respected, an influential, spiritual and cultural organization around the world having a significant impact in uplifting the world. So, again I think the vision being that we need to be respected, we need to be influential. And to do that, we have to... in the bible, Jesus Christ said, “you should **be in the world but not of the world**” So sometimes we have a tendency to think that we are supposed to be out of the world. But that's not Bhakti. Bhakti is not based on that. You know, Arjuna wanted to give up the world and Krishna said, “No boy, back there and fight! But change your consciousness, change your principles”.

So I think, Krishna Consciousness, for the grahasthas... Prabhupada says dozens of times if not more, “you don't have to change your situation. Just become Krishna Conscious”. And if you are a brahmachari, you have dedicated your life fully to the mission, the mission is to help other people become Krishna Conscious. I have to become Krishna Conscious but the proof of my Krishna Consciousness is that I want to make other people Krishna Conscious. And if I want to make other people Krishna Conscious, I need to understand who they are, where they are coming from? What they are into?

So I think that vision for future is that we take the beauty of our Krishna Consciousness culture and we not only go deep in our own lives and our own son in order to bring out that Krishna Consciousness; but we take it to the society at large and ways they can understand. So when the governments are looking at health policies, they ask you. What's the Vaishnava teaching about how we can have healthier environments? And looking for questions on how the society can live more peacefully? And we can generally talk not as outside people saying, ‘you should follow our religious practice of chanting’.

But as people who are integrated in the society, we can say, “you know, there is so much information about meditation and spiritual practices. Different people have different things that they understand about divinity and all that. But here's actually a process that's been around for thousands of years and sure to help people to be more peaceful”. In the prisons and things like that. So doesn't have to be that every action of ours is based on trying to convert people, but again back to an *earlier point I made in other question... How to make people sympathizers?*

So twenty five years down the road, ISKCON is larger, it's respected around the world at least as a minority tradition in most of the world's countries and they look to us to give spiritual guidance. So I think that's well within our means and that's a goal we should look for. I don't foresee a day when in the entire world are devotees of Krishna. When

Chaitanya was there, they were not devotees of Krishna. When Krishna was there, they were not devotees of Krishna, when Prabhupada was there, they were not devotees of Krishna; So I don't think we should think, 'because I am here, they are all going to be devotees of Krishna'.

There will be a lot of people... lots of viewpoints...that's what the material world is meant for. For people in different consciousness. So how do we live with the world, in the world and gradually see how to elevate and help all these different stratum and again we have to get into the society and have an impact on it as strong devotees. Not that we give up our principles. Not that we give up our own practices and our faith and our belief system. But being deeply rooted in that, we go on to make an impact on the world.

Yes... yeah, many... It's mostly maturity. We have to mature a little bit. We have to... It is Bhaktivinoda Thakur who said, "we just need common sense, but it's not very common". Some great personality said that. So we have to have a little more common sense. We have to learn from our mistakes. I can give an example, if I can.

One of the projects that I organized for many years in America and now also in India, we have organized an Interfaith dialogue of... a Vaishnava and Christian dialogue. And we come together for three days and we choose a particular topic like 'the Name of God' or 'Incarnation' or 'Spiritual practice'. And we discuss it. We have a scholar from each of the two traditions write a paper on that topic. And then we study this paper and then we have a dialogue about it.

For two years, we chose a topic called 'Spirit in the world', Renunciation, affirmation, which is very very effective. The very first year we did it in America, we chose a topic: the kingdom of God. And I chose the topic because I was the main organizer and I thought this was a good one for us because we have a lot to say. So I was a little proud.

So, in that meeting, at one point different people... about ten Vaishnavas, ten Christians, all very scholarly people. I was probably one of the academically least qualified person there; as there were big professors from both our side and their side. But they went around and said "So what is the kingdom of God in your tradition? What does it mean to you?" And devotees were sharing, "We have so much realizations and knowledge in our scriptures about God's Kingdom and... Krishna is playing and the different Rasas and He is such a lovable person". The Christians were kind of saying, "We don't know that much. It's not a big part of what we do".

And then I went to one particular scholar who had actually studied our movement, our tradition.... Who was a wonderful Scholar, a religious scholar and also a Christian minister and a President of University. And he looked at everybody and said, "you know, for me it's not that important what the kingdom of God is like. I have faith that I will get there and it's a wonderful place. What's more important for me as a Christian practitioner, that I give my life to make sure that we live according to the laws

of God and we try to help... as best possible, to create the kingdom of God here, and the way we treat our families and the way we treat the environment and the way we live”.

And frankly, I was like, very humbled. This was 1996, and in ISKCON we hadn't still developed the concept of Devotee Care. We were just learning about the abusive... many loopholes that had created an abusive environment, we were struggling with our second generation leadership. Prabhupada had only passed twenty years before. Lots of challenges. And here's this man saying that the real point for me is to create a spiritually focused, spiritually valued life here. And I realized at that time, we need to learn from these people. Maybe they don't know that Krishna is blue and He plays a flute and Radharani is His eternal concert. But they know a lot of things that we don't know.

So I think that, what may hold us back and what will allow us to go forward is if we really follow our Vaishnava principles of Humility and especially if the leaders are willing to learn from anyone and everyone we meet, realizing that Krishna is in everyone's heart and every moment there's something I can learn. And if I am humble in that way, I think we just become like a sponge of understanding how to better serve Prabhupada and his mission. And I think we won't be held back. But if we are not careful, this is Kali Yuga. This is the age the religious people all over the world have caused more problems than almost anybody.

You look at the problems of terrorism, there is so much of religious strife, no matter what tradition it is. There are all little groups of fanatics, whether they are Christian fanatics or Hindu fanatics, Muslim fanatics, Jewish fanatics. They are all there. So how is the Hare Krishna movement going to be more broad-minded, not fall into those traps... a big part of that will predict whether we actually become a very effective and... a movement that has an impact on the world, then it starts with humility, starts with learning from others.