

HG Vraja Bihari Das

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 into the future?

One thing that comes to my mind immediately when I think about that is it's related to some devotee I met at prasadam about a week ago Dinanath Prabhu was one of one of the first devotees that SP sent from America to India. I think it was 1971. And when he was there, I believe this is in Bombay, he got sick and he was in the hospital and the devotees were all going up to Gujarat out to do a big Pandal program with SP but SP insisted to first go to the hospital and to see Dinanath Prabhu enough trouble and he he went to see him, he rubbed his head and said, everything will be alright. And then he spent a lot of time talking to the doctor actually is preaching to the doctor. But he was all so asking the doctor about Dinanath prabhu's care and what his needs were. So this idea of devotee care I mean, we use it a lot and it means so many different things to so many different people. And some people think it's just about you know, spiritual care. And some people think know it's about health insurance if you're in America, but just the overall idea that when someone comes to Krishna consciousness, as SP said, we have to spill 200 gallons of blood to make one person a devotee that we really take care of them and we really take care of them Bhaktivinoda Thakura talks about the four different levels if I get this right. And the spiritual needs, the emotional needs, intellectual needs and the social needs I believe those are the four and that until someone reaches a level of Bhava. A devotee needs all to address all four those needs, not just spiritual needs alone. So this just this, this mood of someone comes to Krishna consciousness, we take care of them. Sometimes we take care of someone, and we really nurture them until they become a devotee and get initiated and then it's like a RAM RAM, we find someone else new to take care of. But we really have to have, you know, Cradle to somebody care. And of course, that means a whole bunch of things. That means, you know, schools for our children, it means programs for youth, it means taking care of Brahmachari, if someone wants to be a brahmachari, the whole life

that they'll be taken care of the society by the society, and not cast aside when they no longer can do full time service. Helping Brahmacharis transition to the grihastha ashrama if they wish to. Having a support system for those who need to retire and take vanaprastha and of course, even care for the Sanyasis. My service, a lot of times, I've dealt with my service has been a lot, dealing with sanyasis who fall down, who leave the Society of Devotees or give up their sanyas vows. And lots of times, I find that I asked them what's happened, how did you go from being such a strict sadhaka to having some spiritual shortcomings. And a lot of times, they would say, I didn't have anyone to talk to, there was no one I could trust, I felt that if I revealed my mind, it might be on, you know, Facebook, or, you know, some website the next day. So that's a lot about devotee care is being there when devotees are struggling when they're having some problems. We all struggle, it's the material world, everyone, everyone struggles. In some way or another, it might not be with the regulative principles, but it maybe with something else. So being there to take care of the devotees. And part of that is giving them real, helping them find fulfilling activities in the mission. Because it's not just devotee cares, we sit around, take prasadam and talk to each other all day, but serving together and sharing Krishna consciousness with others. Because that is such a high taste that someone gets by sharing Krishna consciousness with others, by distributing some of SP books, by giving them opportunities to do that is a super important aspect of devotee care. So it's not either or, it's not the mission or taking care of devotees. It's both and it's working to the whole life of a devotee. Everything from their physical needs, to their preaching needs to helping them at least getting a facility to have a real taste for hearing and chanting. Right, whether they take that facility, that's up to them that's their individual choice. But giving that facility for hearing and chanting, a place to study SP books in the association of devotees, nice Kirtans etc. That's all part of devotee care.

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 fulfill the same.

Well, it is unlimited, because SP had such big plans. One time he was, it was feel Philippines, Hong Kong. He was feeling a little a little toothpick, which had like, I think the ...on top or something like that, it snapped or broke and he kind of laughed, you know, chuckled and they turn to the devotee and he said something to the effect, i'm not exactly quoting but my desire is that everyone become Krishna conscious. So, so many aspects, a few that I'll touch upon. And you mentioned here in the in the outline is education for children. It's really hard to do it. And I don't even know if ISKCON can do it at the present moment, but a real solid sane Gurukul has unlimited potential. I can say that, because my son went to Gurukul in Vrindavan from a year one to year 12, ten plus two to the whole time is was in Vrindavan Gurukula and I'm not trying to you know, glorify my wife, my wife was the principal and there wasn't abuse, it wasn't mistreatment. There was not only that wasn't but there was a lot of Krishna consciousness seeing Krishna Balarama everyday, a lot of fun, a lot of competition with other schools, alot of travel to holy places, asking any of my sons peers went to school that time they they love Gurukula and now they're doing so many wonderful things both in Krishna consciousness and in terms of a successful career. So it can be done, it can be done that I'm not saying the way we did it in Vrindavana was the only way now there's obviously there's different ways but racking our heads together to put together something really solid for our children. And it's not that it's not done in some pockets of ISKCON but it's certainly not a universally available, some devotees are following a ..Mataji's program for homeschooling and that's really going well I spoke to Dayarama Prabhu yesterday and he said his son is in Devotee School in Calcutta that's really doing well. And then we have our schools in other places. So that's one thing. And then another thing that I'm noticing is, is management. And I mean, even in the GBC level, I was talking to one GBC member the other day, what mentioned his name, and I was asking him about his schedule. And again, if I mentioned the places he's going, you might figure out who it is. But basically, he's crisscrossing the planet because of so many different

engagements and so many big opportunities that are made available for him to help spread Krishna consciousness. So just know I also travel a lot for because I have a regular job. And that means that entails a lot of traveling, I don't see how, for example, this wonderful saintly person has any time practically to think of global ISKCON from a managerial perspective and all the things that we're working on the Organizational Development Committee of the GBC and because that takes a lot of thought, a lot of prayer, a lot of figuring out what the non ISKCON people do, and trying to apply those things that work in ISKCON and interviews and talking to devotee etc. It's a lot of energy that goes into what's needed from a management point of view. And remember, of course, management is there to facilitate the spreading of Krishna consciousness and helping the devotees be Krishna conscious. The GBC strategic planning motto is More devotees, happier devotees. So spreading Krishna consciousness and taking care of the devotee we have. That's a lot of energy in terms of the managerial level. And I see that besides coming to these meetings twice a year, I don't know how much most of the GBC's are thinking in that Global Management way. So I have some hope for this new position. GDO Global Duty officer. But I think we need to put a lot of energy into Global Management in order to, you know, facilitate more devotees and happier devotees. It takes it takes a lot, we can't, what is it that saying Today's problems are, were caused by yesterday solutions. So what really worked well, when SP had 12 GBC's and a few temples scattered around the world needs to the principles need to be maintained. But the infrastructure needs to be increased many, many fold and the infrastructure has not kept pace with the growth of ISKCON. So that is something that's really get to be fulfilled. And then another thing that's yet to be fulfilled is just some places do it but just making sure that we're really thinking big, you know, where we're, we're rubbing elbows with the leaders of the world, we're doing interfaith programs with other you know, face in order to you know, be relevant and so just thinking big, thinking big in terms of how we can have an impact on the world is something that I think we have to keep in mind that SP one said, My only fault or is it only or my one fault is it I cannot think small i cannot think small. So thinking big and and what is it? Impossible is a word found in fools dictionary. So thinking, racking our brains to spread Krishna consciousness and get results I know that's a

big thing for many devotees that I work with is that another thing we may have lost to some extent is how result driven SP was, really wanted to see results and again it has to be balanced with the heart I know what I remember one letter where SP wrote that you know someone was saying they were in so much anxiety they distribute so many books or whatever his situation and SP said, just you know, you have to remember Krishna so again it's that balance because we're not the International Society for spreading the International Society for Krishna Consciousness we're actually the International Society for Krishna Consciousness so so again it's not a dichotomy we have the more we get Krishna consciousness hearing and chanting and while we can give it to others.

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.

Well I'm going to cheat a little bit and tell you something that we've been working on these are about two or three GBC's and the devotee scholars in ISKCON in Oxford and with Radhika Raman Prabhu and a few others we work together to come up with Gita principles or Gita values, we go back and forth and what we call them they're six in number cause there's obviously more than six values in the Gita but six that we found can help to devotees whenever they think are pretty much any decision they have to make and also it's fantastic in spreading Krishna conscious and telling people about Krishna consciousness. I was at a interfaith meeting at the us senate big building where all the senators and congressmen to make decisions and so I it was my it was there was the leaders from the Islamic faith and the Christian and the Jewish I represented Hinduism, Krishna consciousness and I spoke on these and people Wow, that's fantastic. So these are them. The first one is Sama Darshinah right from the Gita to have equal vision and are Samah Darshinah goes beyond even seeing all humans as equal, right, whether they're black or white, or or man or woman or you know of any different faith as far it goes beyond its all species, right? Because we say Ishvara Sarva

Bhutanam Hrd desha arjuna Tishtati, Krishna is in everone's heart what is that verse ? vidya-vinaya-sampanne

brahmane gavi hastini

sunī caiva sva-pake ca

panditah sama-darsinah, so this idea of samah darsinah and that can apply very much to management, to preaching. I remember when I was, you know, book distributor, one of the things we always meditated on was that statement of Caitanya Caritamrita ,what was it not considering who was fit or unfit? the Pancattatva gave love of Godhead and so I always noticed that when I when I tried to make material calculations, and was 19 or 20 years old that person look like they have been interested in a book and that person doesn't, it wasn't the same as if I approached everyone and, I'd be surprised that someone would be really tough businessman, this I was really favorable. And a person looked really cool with, you know, a peace sign and a tie dye shirt tells me to get lost. So Samah Darsinah is one of the principles. The next one is Acharya. Yad Yad acarati Sreshthas, third chapter of the Gita that a devotee, Krishna says in Gita says that a leader teaches by their example. And then SP talks about, you know, you can't tell someone to give up smoking if you still smoking and that story about Mahatma Gandhi and the sweets, right? But the idea that what is it, What you are speaks so loudly, i can't hear what you're saying. So we really have to walk our talk and teach by by example. That's so powerful. I have a good friend of mine who was at a conference and he was he, they sat him at the table across from the Dalai Lama and It was other big leaders. And so the devotee ordered a salad and because it was dinner, and so he called a waiter make sure there's no onions or garlic and no dressing. Just put some olive oil and some salt bass and Dalai Lama ordered chicken. And of course, the Dalai Lama heard this devotee making his food offer and Dalai Lama the whole time during dinner was embarrassed because it's the devotee was showing for us ofcourse, it's nothing we are vegetarians, but it's a big example for other people. And it sets examples of people. So people really want leaders that walk their talk. And if you just open the newspaper today, in any country of the world, practically, there's stories about people who don't walk

their talk. So acara is the second one. The third one is Priti is there. And so the idea is dealing with affection with everyone, of course, especially with devotees, right, we make a difference between Jiva Daya and Vaishnava Sewa, right. So with devotees, we have Vaishnava Sewa certain kind of Priti, but also the Jiva Daya is a kind of priti also. So it's kind of a fact it's just compassion, it's a little administrative slightly differently. But the idea of dealing with, trying to deal, you can imagine if all of us tried as much as we can with every exchange except for the total rascal, every exchange with affection what that would mean to our family relationships. So what that would mean in a Brahmachari ashram and what that would mean to our preaching and I was thinking about this that even SP we talk sometimes about Hawaii and this one devotee Gaurasundara who basically took the property outside of ISKCON at least at some point I don't remember but ultimately it was inclusion SP was very angry naturally, right and he even sent a letter, I believe to all GBC's is something I can't remember the details but basically you know this cannot be done anyone a certain system set in place and he's very upset. So on one hand he acted very upsetting the activity, the next year in Vrindavana, he dealt very affectionately with Gaurasundara and that's not discount SP was very strict dealings year before because he wasn't discounting that but he also had this Priti and even perhaps a greater example is with one week so we won't mention names but one Sanskrit scholar who who at one time was so offensive to SP so offensive, I won't even repeat what he said SP and SP said this person has become a snake again, don't associate with him. But then later he told our Sridhara Maharaja, the Jolly Swami that go find so and so, try to bring him back. So even in a person who offended him and was the snake and therefore warned devotees not to associate with them he still had some hope later on to deal with and with Priti again, that doesn't mean we could also start associating with him again, but just the fact that he had this incredible compassionate and credible priti. The next one is Iccha means desire. iccha-dvesa-samutthena

dvandva-mohena bharata

. It can also mean choice. And if you think about the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna used his free will his choice to you know at first seven and the second chapter Now iam

your disciple he's choosing to be Krishna's disciple and ask them to instruct him and then at the end of the Gita, Krishna says all your doubts you know gone. Do as you wish and Arjuna chooses so Krishna doesn't hold a gun to his head he did he shows that with logic and with love what Arjuna should do. But our Arjuna had the free choice so that's that's an important principle because we all have that as SP called minute independence. So recognizing that in others and as a famous letter to Karandhara Prabhu where he explains the ISV principle right? what is it ? Spontaneous, Voluntary what does the I stand for ? independent? maybe. I can't remember but anyway this idea that the leaders ideal leader inspires people to want to serve Krishna to exercise their free will that sometimes we have to say you know you can't live in the ashram if you don't go to Mangal arti etc etc but obviously much better is that activity spot you know really wants to get out, runs to the temple for Mangal aarti you know dives in the temple to pay obeisance to SP and deities, individual yes, individual So this idea of Iccha is a big principle in the Gita and then we have amanitva, we have humility which of course we understand is so essential you can't really practice you can't get that strong desire that we just talked about without humility because it comes a time and every devotee his life or not hopefully many times they just realize by their you know spiritual muscle alone they're not going to they don't have it they have they just need mercy you know, as SP said it chanting Hare Krishna is like child calling out for its mother. So if you just imagine a child like in an airport, and they're lost to their mother and there's people going by with their suitcases left and right in the child's totally frightened. Only thing that they can do is call out for their mother. So that's the mood of that's that's humility, and even see that in the Sikshastakam, right? because in the second verse the devotee concludes that even though you've been so kind you given the holy name I am so unfortunate. I have no taste for the holy name because I commit offenses and therefore the result of having that realization is the next verse trinad api sunicena, therefore you shouldn't be very proud if we realize I've no taste and SP sometimes said, they'd because I've committed offenses. So therefore the next verse is Krishna, please help me, please help me. So humility is it is the biggest mentioned as the first, is that in the 13th chapter of the Gita, the first aspect of knowledge, very first one is humility, right? So that's humility. And the last one is Ahimsa which I

believe either seven or nine times it's mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita. So Ahimsa so we often quote as non violent, you could also say, Do no harm. and it doesn't mean and it goes way beyond physical Ahimsa. It's connected with that Priti that with every person we meet with every situation we deal with, we don't harm that person or is SP I think in Gita, we don't in any way block their march, their spiritual progress, right. So this idea of doing no harm, just like the doctors have that Hippocratic oath, right, the first thing is do no harm. So ahimsa say, goes much beyond, you know, Mr. Gandhi's idea of it into the spiritual realm. So you asked if I Those are my personal principles, I can only say that those are personal aspirations to act according to those those values. And like I said, there's other values. Of course, all six of these are surrounded by Bhakti, because that's the essence of the essence of the Bhagavad Gita. And I find that even sometimes when we're making managerial decisions, we can we can ask, does this set a good example for the future? Are we doing this with sufficient compassion? Are we honouring the devotees? A free will? Right? We can ask different court, those Which ones? Which one of those six apply to any kind of managerial decision.

Q Please recount your best and most successful projects (or initiatives) during your tenure as leader/ GBC (2 to 3). With respect to each project/ initiative.

Okay, well, I guess for me, the kind of obvious one is establishing ISKCON resolve. And how that happened was, I used to attend the GBC meetings, both as the deputy and sometimes as a facilitator. And I saw how much time they were spending on conflicts, either amongst themselves, which have become a lot less over the years, but also just in the society take to the train so much energy, so much energy, so I didn't, I never was, I didn't know anything about conflicts. But it's interesting how Krishna can inspire you or make arrangements even so I saw this, didn't know anything about it was just living in Vrindavana and doing my service. And so I went to the GBC and I said, Well, can you just give me a grant of \$500 and I'll buy a bunch of books and I'll read up on this topic. Okay, so that was just so you just take one step and then by Krishna's arrangement, a devotee in Boston, told me about his next door neighbor, and his next door neighbour was

the famous highly successful person in the conflict resolution field and he connected me with that person and that person, he and I just kind of clicked, his name was Arnold Zach and we started working on this and he was started training me and then he said oh I have someone I want you to meet and this was the lead, the partly the guru of conflict resolution in America. Yeah, I mean, one of the top three people in the field and so that person I've been working with now for 15, 16 years you know, we exchanged probably thousand emails a year something like that. And and both and, and she has offered lakhs if not crores of rupees of service for free for free because she's one of the top consultants in the world she's she's gone quantity train devotee in the bus and temple, twice in London. Yeah, it's amazing. So, so then it just started developing. And then we held the mediation training the next year, and then Yogeshwara Prabhu and Rama Tirtha prabhu attended that material to prove it can do that. And pressure Lila Mata Ji and so gradually grew and we got some more people involved. And then Arnold came to Mayapur and made a presentation to the GBC that and then the vote afterwards to establish ISKCON resolve was unanimous. And now 15 years later and it's still, it's still going on. So I don't I really don't say that it is sense of taking credit but just you know, seeing a need trying to fulfill it and Krishna opening up the realm of possibilities in order to in order to do that. And then the other thing was strategic planning which we started in 2006 so that was Gopal Bhatta Prabhu and I just talked about the future and when it doesn't seem that any that are hardly thinking about the future at all and what our plans for, what is what is the GBC 's plans so just on a whim I'm not on a whim but hail mary is what we call in America just by chance we wrote to Bhakti Vaibhava Maharaja the GBC Chairman at that time and said could we meet and he was that far away thinking maybe it was in Germany and I was in Belgium so and we decided to meet in France and Gopal Bhatta Prabhu up the proof flew over I think .. also came and somehow or other we were they were Bhakti Vaibhava Maharaja became convinced so much so that they did something extra extra ordinary they as a chairman he called for a special meeting that GBC in Italy during the middle of the year which was never done before maybe for an emergency but not for something that was proactive and looking into the future no emergency and most of the GBC's is came and that was the start of the strategic planning team and now as you can see because

we're here that the midterm meetings are part of the analogy busy schedule and there's so many different projects like the GBC college that came from that first meeting by Bhakti Vaibhava Maharaja so again a small the smallest possible meeting meeting in a hotel room in Paris and now you know the GBC college is just one of dozens of of initiatives that that the GBC side and even perhaps more than that you can see with the GBC members of course the time factor helps but that they're thinking of succession thinking about the future and and think about what else has come out of the iOS is kind of leadership sangha every two years the SG, GS sanghas of Gurus and sanyasis. So many things have emerged from that first meeting in Paris so that the key success was seeing a need and trying to fulfill that need by Krishna is mercy so when we get an inspiration of course you know we may need to check with Guru, sadhu, sastra but often those inspirations when they done hopefully done in the right mood any of us have that done in the right mood like I can't I'm sure I had all kinds of bogus material desires in in working on those two projects I just mentioned but luckily Krishna said akama sarvo kamova... we all know no material desires, we are all material desires you know just try to serve Krishna. So I think that's that said to be have our finger on the pulse of the movement and our finger on and if that's not our specific service our finger on the pulse of what's going on around us in the world and without changing any Krishna conscious principles finding ways to be relevant and connected people aren't yet Krishna conscious So in this case seeing a need, in both cases we saw need went to the authorities authorities accepted it and although neither is kind of resolved nor the strategic planning is perfect by any stretch of the imagination it's still you know done some service so I think that's where again the solutions , problems of today are caused by solutions of yesterday so in that's that that's saying isn't always true but I think it applies sometimes, so looking for ways to improve our service in whatever services depending you know whether it's a pot washer who finds a better way to scrub the pots right, all the way up to a GBC member finding a better way to inspire the Devotees in his or her zone.

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

I think I basically covered that with the key to values I think those that's there's there's more like I said but if we if our leaders have those six we'd be doing fantastic well the first one I you know besides whatever you're already doing and and I was presenting chapter 10 verse 32 of the Gita Krishna says I am the truth that's been again I'm paraphrasing that's been arrived that at a cool headed, detached Krishna conscious way and avoiding vitanda and jalpa which are these again iam not going to in details in Sanskrit but crooked ways to just win by any by hook or by crook and and when decisions are like that and and sometimes they're this is connected also with confirmation bias, right the idea that just like if you want a certain thing to happen in ISKCON. Let's say you're pro and not that this is should be a dichotomy it shouldn't but let's say you're pro Varnashrama, so you'll you'll pick up on the quotes from SP and you finally kind of almost neglect the others they kind of go in one ear out the other but the ones and you paste those into your into your Word document and you print about this to be them right or similarly if you're you know if you think about just you know varnashrama. I don't know about that it would be really hard to preach by Varnashrama but pure devotional service and varnashrama is not possible in Kaliyuga etc. you'll pick up others because because they're they're also because they confirm your bias. So leaders it's it's a really hard thing to do. But leaders need for the benefit of our movement to be cool headed. That doesn't mean they don't take strong decisions but as I'm making decisions remaining cool headed remaining sattvic not giving into the other modes of material nature and looking at everything SP said, sastra said what the Shastra says in the cool head detached way and praying right, praying to SP and Krishna and the Vaishnava in the previous charges for guidance to have the wisdom to sometimes look at contradictory instructions and see what is that the what is the way forward. And another thing I would strictly teach new leaders about is avoiding that similar avoiding making assumptions, making inferences, we all make assumptions, that's a given. It's part of life. But when it when it comes into making serious decisions, when it comes into dealing with other devotees, be so careful about assumptions that we make be so careful. You

know, they say while assume you make an ass out of you and me, right. When i was a sankirtan leader one time and I'll make a long story short and a devotee came up to me Brahmachari so that he wanted to leave the ashrama and help us move back to farm where his parents lived. So I started preaching to him you know Parama Vijayate Sri Krishna sankirtan you know Srama eva hi kevalam and you know, all the strong verses, you know, And it went in one ear and out the other because I made some assumptions that he was just in maya or agitated that, you know, looking at ladies or whatever, and I didn't take the time to listen to him. and find out what was really situation. The situation was that his, his father got in an accident, couldn't take care of the farm anymore, his mother need to be cared for. And he just felt the need to take care of them. So, you know, I, I gave all I quoted All right, slokas because so the, you know, operation was successful. But the patient died. Because I made certain assumptions. And so we do that sometimes the devotees, we put, you know, we pigeonhole them, Oh, I know so and so, she's like this, I know so and so. So he or she is like that. and we don't, sometimes also, we don't give the benefit of the doubt, generally. Now, of course, there's, there's always exceptions when someone's really acting like a rascal or something like that. But in general, in general, leaders should assume good intentions in general, It's kind of like a self fulfilling prophecy. When you when you treat someone as if they have integrity and intentions, they often will rise up to the occasion and have those even if they maybe didn't have previously. Now again, and realize that there's exceptions you can't we don't you know, just give everyone the keys to the the the Treasury we were obviously very careful but as a general rule and dealing with the devotees and being a leader avoiding this you know, a confirmation bias avoiding making rash assumptions and also connected and I just presented this GBC is avoiding logical fallacies like the ad hominem attack you know, you attack the person instead of their argument, right someone says I think again I hate to keep us I think you know varnashrama is impossible and kaliyuga just not possible let's not do it. And then somebody says well that's Krishnadas you know about Krishnadas, you know what he did two years ago. So that's an ad hominem, attack instead of it you know attacking his point not attacking but challenging his point with other Shastric references and things you would challenge the person and there's so

many we could get into them now, but to you know, two wrongs don't make a right and false cause and post hoc ergo proper after this, because of this and topic switching. So there's this all it's taught in Jayadvaita Maharajs class class on strong speaking and clear thinking. So I think those are really important things I know we do a lot of other trainings in the college already but those kind of things and I would love it's possible to teach them but just that that those things are really really important for leader.

Organizational SWOT for today's ISKCON

Q Which do you see as the core strengths of ISKCON which you feel should be preserved for the future generations? What do you think can be done to preserve and transmit them?

Q Which do you see as underlying weaknesses/ shortcomings in the way ISKCON is growing and operating today? What do you think can be done to reduce them?

Q Which do you see as the biggest opportunities which ISKCON should capitalize on in the near future? What do you think should be done to capitalize on them?

Q Which do you see as the biggest threats to the movement in the near future? What do you think should be done to deal with them?

Well one of the big strengths is that we're still here when you think about all the challenges that we went through in the late 70s and pretty much the whole 80s it's in one sense it's pretty amazing that we're not only still here but we've grown and developed and matured and sometimes it just seems that it's only happened by Christians mercy because it seemed like it was so many challenges at different at different times. So that's one strength is that there is a GBC as much as people poo poo the GBC and this that it's you know the favourite punching bag on the internet. The reality is that the fact that these people have these devotees have stuck together and kept the GBC going as it's been a huge impact. And it's a it's actually a huge strength that we don't think on a day to day basis because often the GBC don't affect us in a day to day basis. Most devotees in the movement, so

of course, and other strength is SP's books, Caitanya Mahaprabhus mercy ,right, the six goswamis. Lord Krishna ,Vrindavana Dhama, Mayapur Dhama. These are all strengths and also the senior devotees. Just everything that SP gave us is that strength. This is a strength Weaknesses. Well, let's make it simple, not taking advantage of all those strengths, not taking advantages, opportunities, we talked about just being being much more relevant in the world and threats. Well, there's giving up this unity and diversity thing, getting on the bodily concept of life. I'm from such and such a country I was born in such and such a cast
iam a male and a female, all these bodily concept, nonsense. We have to be careful not to get into this thing just like Krishna says in the Gita, that mode of goodness, people look at the commonalities, the one that oneness, I was trying to avoid that word for obvious reasons, but the commonalities but the mode of passion makes us focuses on differences. And so we want to avoid that especially in the society of devotees. Because you know like I sp said that so there's nothing externally that can stop our movement. So it's only internally, so that's a threat would be to for go to set aside that dadati pratigri... loving exchanges for politics, for expediency for the bodily the concept of life like that. Well, okay, opportunities. One thing I see. And I don't know if it's come to India yet, but I think it has is this idea that I am spiritual, but not religious, right? Because religious organizations have let people down so much like, I haven't lived in Indian for six years. But there was that Swami, I forget his name, who was caught with the ladies and was all over the, you know, so that that hurts people's faith, then the child abuse in the Catholic Church, and even recently in Houston when they have this huge hurricane. And at first, this person who Joel Austin who runs this mega church, he didn't open up the church for, you know, select the people who didn't have a home the refugees and then he just got blasted all over media and the internet. So people have, so how, so it's an opportunity, we are an organization, obviously, otherwise I wouldn't have flown all the way Ujjain, right? You know, we have we have an organization but how to make that organization focused primarily on primarily, but yes, focus on having a heart having a Krishna conscious not just any heart, not a mushy heart, but a Krishna conscious, heart, because people are afraid of, you know, so called organized religions, you know, when they hear things like hierarchy, right, global hierarchy, as we talked about,

sometimes, right, or the ultimate managing which are SP words, we are not going to change this but just that idea, they've, you know, just like SP said about the cow that was in the fire in the barn. And now every time he sees the cows eat, she sees red. So similarly, people, religion is getting a pretty what, what speak of what's happening, sometimes Islam people are getting very bad taste for that. So how to attract people who are spiritual, not religious, yet, and at the same time, get them to be, you know, favorable, and not only favorable, but a part of the ISKCON family but doing it in such a way that doesn't go against their bad experiences of, you know, or bad things that they've heard about in the media about religions. And, you know, when people ask me is ISKCON an organized religion I say, No, we're very unorganized. That's a little joke but But seriously, that's it's a challenge because a lot of the intelligent people in the world in many parts of the world least hold back from religions because of what's happened to them and probably won't get any better kali yuga progressess. So as a huge opportunity to to approach people who are spiritual but not necessarily religious, and show them the Bhagavad Gita, which is not really religious, it's spiritual, it's some samah darshinah, it's priti, it's ichaa, right it's achara.

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

Well, it's kind of connected to what I've already said that the devotees is learned this incredible way of keeping this balance. The unity in diversity principal SP said, wonderful, another letter that I want, every year that the senior devotees come to mayapur and discuss this unity in diversity, he said that make our movement successful. That will make them successful. So sometimes, so often, we fight over diversity in so many different ways. So in So specifically, finding that incredible sweet spot to maintain the tradition and be relevant to the world. It's a tricky one sometimes, but it's definitely possible to do that's, you know, if we can, I think will be very, very successful. We have to maintain tradition, we have to maintain principles. But if we don't adjust details, this is the beginning of the sixth chapter of nectar of devotion, principles and details. So if we change the principal and you

know, we probably lose a lot of our some of our connection to the parampara. But if we don't adjust things, sometimes to make them more relevant, the people that we're dealing with, you know, how do you, you have to connect with people, there's this great letter that SP wrote to Balwanta prabhu where he said, then again, I'm paraphrasing that we have to learn to talk to the intelligent class of people. And he said, because they're, they're a little puffed up that they deserve it he said, and he said, we have to learn the art of dealing with them and basically says we have to learn to listen to them and appreciate their point of view though that is exactly it's appreciate their point of view about college preaching specifically. And you could think Americans 1971 or 72 and the letter was written their point of view is drugs, sex, rock and roll and mayavada philosophy but still he said if you listen to them and appreciate their point of view then you can make them gradually join us so being relevant without you know what is it I've lost my cast and I'm still hungry you know we don't want to you know we don't want that that to happen. So, we want to maintain the principles of KC strictly or lovingly and strictly. and then meet people halfway and express you know, we have this this much Krishna conscious philosophy but when you listen to someone you know which part of that philosophy will help them so you take that one book down, you know figuratively and you put that otherwise sometimes our preaching, more like a shotgun, you know it shotgun shoots many different pellets and he's kind of close your eyes and you shoot some slokas is that somebody and hope something hits them but our preaching should be more like a laser where we know exactly where a person is at and then we take that part of the philosophy and show them how Krishna consciousness can help them in their life according to whatever their worldview is the way that they that the way that they see the world so I think that, ofcourse so many things we can say we can say in Facebook we can say so many things but at least where I sit and my service is balance it faithfulness, the tradition and relevance is the key a key. In our presentations at the SCGS and the iOS we talk about the three ecosystems right the spiritual sometimes we call guru shishya but it's the spiritual training side then there's the management and then there's the social and in our presentation we talked about how if you neglect and what if you totally neglect the social. What happens to the society? okay, what if you neglect the spiritual ? what if you

neglect the management ? managerial side they are inter dependent and so all three are needed so we do need you know that's why we're here in Ujjain at these meetings, we do need to work to to as I said early catch up the administration with the growth of the movement and it has to be done in a certain mood and I know that that mood is we try to inculcate at the college GBC college, Social culture ecosystem, i mean there is just a simple example, okay now maybe different different parts of the world but in some parts of the world atleast we're seeing that, we're talking about care of the devotees is is that giving them some kind of Stipend what is the word that we use, living allowances word we use in the temple that I'm from but giving some kind of way that the devotees especially of course grihasthas, can take care of themselves respectfully not luxuriously but respectfully, have something for the way for their old age. Have something ways, they can visit the Holy Dhams and things like that in some parts of the world. That seems to be the best way to make sure that we're going to have leaders into the future and in other places there may be so many qualified Brahmacharis ,sanyasis may not be as much as an issue that certainly is a socio cultural issue. And SP didn't talk too much about this, at least in a positive sense. Of course, all practically in his time, almost all of the devotees lived in the ashram. So it was different that, you know, the devotees were still in their 20s. Now, in the 40s or 50s, it's different. But that that's just one thing that struck me when you mentioned social cultural ecosystem, but just trying to make all three of these strong for years, it's of course, it's improving vastly now, but for years, the family structure was not strong and there would be so many divorces and people you know that a wing taking Sanyasa and I don't care about my family, right, or whatever, so that you know, should be strong and Krishna consciously, management, we talked about that already. And of course, the spiritual and so all three of those are strong, it'll be great. I already mentioned one that so many of our leaders are so busy doing their preaching services that they may not be able to give the energy and the time even if they have the capabilities into really creating a really strong structure again, that supports the preaching and supports the devotee care and also you know, it'd be nice to have a few billion dollars. We laugh at that but I was just reading the other day about that guy religious leader was a Reverend mooni, he passed away I think in 2012, but he started before it

SP, he started in the late 50s in terms of a mission. Ofcourse SP started from the day he was born. He just was in a hut in North Korea and you know, somehow he had billions and billions and billions of dollars well, I don't know maybe that's but he had billions he owned like four or five newspapers and businesses and things we you know, I was reading that I think we have not been able to do it on that scale.