

H.G Pancharatna pr.

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?

Just a few um let see where to start SP's visionary capacity, his capacity to see an opportunity and to boldly grab those opportunities and just serve or you should say depend on Krishna and just take it, i think that's that's a leadership quality that SP had which in one sense was fundamental to his success. His ability to envision to see how things could happen, we see this in his various letters and so on where he talks about how we can spread Krishna consciousness in so many different ways. And he was constantly thinking of different ways and very so his visionary quality coupled with his willingness to boldly step forth and grab those opportunities as they presented themselves. But then on the other side of the coin, he was also very careful in using Krishna's resources, he is very careful with resources. So that's sort of balance. Although he was bold, he wasn't reckless he was, he took risks where he wasn't reckless. Another major, major quality which is fundamental to his success, was his care, true care for devotees, for people in general. I mean, not just devotees, for just for people, his kindness and his care. His genuine interest in the welfare of others his integrity. He attributes his own success, he attributes to single mindedness, ekaha kurunandana vyavasatmika buddhi ekaha kurunandana, he attributes that to his determination, his determination to serve his spiritual master to that single mindedness, that's another leadership quality that SP had. His willingness to hear, and to empower the miracles of our movement in the way it grew was, can be attributed to his capacity to empower others in a very simple way. He, I like to point out the San Francisco project. Mukunda Maharaj was leaving anyway, he was going to California with his not sure if they were I think they were married by that time, Janaki. But anyway, he was going because it was in his plan. And SP just said one sentence it would be good if you open a center there that one sentence stuck with him, he went, visited his friends Shamyasunder and Gurudas in Oregon, told them about his experience, they said, Yeah, it sounds like a nice adventure and they went to San Francisco, and they organized this fantastic monster rock concert, they opened the center. From that one sentence, SP empowered those

individuals, because they, they felt that they could do they have that sense that, yes, we can do this! So his, his capacity to empower others, that's another leadership quality. Ofcourse, it's hard to, emulate that. And he had a SP had the potency that with the with the empowerment came with that instruction came the empowerment, but you know, that's where we have to sort of try to be instruments of SP, and his empowerment, His willingness to consider the various sides of an equation and change his mental models we've been hearing in the GBC meetings alot about mental models, and SP demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to change his mental model according to the needs and circumstances and the evolution of things, he could change his underlying way of looking at a situation and come up with an innovative solution. So that's another extraordinary important quality.

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 mean, every project has challenges. And my service to this ISKCON has generally been in new things, you know, doing starting something, developing it, I, that's been my, my service from, from the 70s. And so I've always been in the realm of starting up something- startups and so on. The challenges are always, you know, understanding just what to do. *And I found in my service, a lot of what wherever I found success, it's, I mostly found it by learning from others, I feel that you don't have to reinvent the wheel, I mean, you may have to you know, adjust the wheel, but you don't have to start from scratch, generally, in almost everything that you're trying to do. Someone has done something kind of like it's similar. And if you go back and you look at what they've done, and you ask questions, you learn, you analyze, and then you try to apply it, then, you know, you can get success.* So, basically, in every, all the projects I've worked on, that's been a key element is to look at what somebody else has done. Well, you know, there's different kinds of this, there's see project challenges, which is, are presented by the nature of the material world, then there's relationship challenges, relationship challenges. I guess what, I've seen in a few times when there is a relationship issue or relationship problem. And our natural tendency is

to become emotional and we get, we get angry. Anger is one of the immediate problems you have to deal with. When something's not going the way you think it should go. And somebody's doing something, or, or even saying something or you there's some criticism or whatever there is actually anger is a natural consequence . But anger is useless! generally speaking, and it just completely is a distraction. All it does is make you feel bad. So I have tried to practice the corner art, but I've tried to practice the setting aside of that, the, the objective, looking at the mind and saying, this is not me, this is my mental construct, this is the mind just behaving the way it behaves. And I have a choice, I have a choice to keep going along without, or just stop and take shelter of Krishna and His holy name and just put it aside, not feed it not keep feeding that anger or any sort of emotion, critical emotion that may be standing in the way of just just doing things. So that's, that's one. And ofcourse, sadhana is always important. Having starting your day with Mangal aati. And kirtan, and we are the Sankirtan Movement. So to start our days with with strong good kirtan, and then meditating, you know, chanting the holy names, meditating, and hearing Srimad Bhagavatam these things are, are essential for being able to then go into the day and, and work one of the challenges is a leader or a manager, I don't call myself a leader, but I do have management responsibilities is the tendency during your sadhana, to be thinking about your responsibilities. So, so that's something to, you have to keep working on, you know how to, to set aside and just remember, my, what I try to do is, I try to just loud affirmations. When I find these things happening right to myself, I just say, this is your time for chanting, this is the time for Krishna, this is not the time for this, just come back, come back ! So, you know, just mentally affirming out loud. I think that's, that's helpful atleast for me, I find it helpful in my attempts to, to hear the holy names when I chant.

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, please expand:

.....Well, probably, okay. It's, it's a little hard. I mean, I, I look towards my various services during my you know, my life. And there are many highlights. And there are some also some failures, one of the most interesting I know, it's, I can't, it's hard to say, which is, but one of the most interesting to me, at least it was, it was totally new was, I started an NGO in Mayapur called the Mayapur Vikas Sangha. And this was a completely new field because this was not directly spreading Krishna consciousness. Up till then I had been doing things like helping well in in New York as a young devotee, I was organizing college preaching programs, festivals in the park, you know, Harinaams, all kinds of other outreach activity. And then I was involved in buying the 55th Street temple and moving the devotees in and all kinds of services. So, but everything was basically, you know, directly somehow connected. Now, here was another project, which wasn't directly spreading Krishna consciousness, it was more along the lines of -Here we are in Mayapur, and we can build ...in the words of my friend Avi Ram, we can build an island of prosperity in a sea of despair, you know, that, that would be like putting a diamond in a, you know, an iron ring or something. So on that basis, and plus of there were other other things in I came to believe in this service that as devotees these we have opportunities and some responsibilities to, to care for the, our neighbours and their material needs. I see, this is sort of Kshatriya type of work, although I don't see myself as a Kshatriya. But as, as that kind of sphere. And to do this work, I had to get funds. And so we succeeded in that. That time, it's about I was with the organization for about three years, three, four years. And I went back to America to get nearly a million dollars in grants from the United Nations Development Program from the India Canada environment, fond from the western Bengal government, from the German government, from the UK Government. So it was and doing that was a big learning curve for me. But it showed me that through the experience, I could see not only that, that we do have an opportunity, people will help us and support us in doing these kinds of things. But that also there is a connection in this field with spreading Krishna consciousness, because Krishna consciousness is or spirituality, I should say, is a missing element in all of this kind of work. And so we have an opportunity to combine spirituality with social activity. And we've seen devotees, doing this in other parts. So that was, you know, the success was, was very exciting and interesting. Okay, well, again, the first one was what I said before, I copied other people, okay, I went and I found out experts, and I learned from them and I

replicated what they were doing, adjust with adjustments I learned from the experts, and I applied it, that was, I think the most important thing. In the other was just, you know, creativity also, because I did that. But then I also thought of new things, I try to take the same like the arsenic, we did an arsenic remediation program. So in that project, we were invited to be part of the, the, the core group that was planning the project that was going to be funded by the India Canada environment. And so I took advantage of all these other things that I learned to try to apply it in the in that situation and use strategic planning techniques. And because we learned a bit into really use strategic planning, and because most of the other organizations that were involved, we're not so you know, they're a little more certain and doing so they couldn't move their mental models, they couldn't, they couldn't get into systems thinking they couldn't get into these things so well, because they, you know, they had learned it So, and it was just they were more comfortable doing it did so. So, I think that that those were the factors learning from others, willing to listen to experts, use expert opinion, apply systems thinking and strategic planning.

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

Well, I think the the fundamental value is the is love and compassion that that our mission is based on compassion and being able to see the spiritual need of humanity and really feel the urgency of that and value you know that being the the core value that motivates what we do is is to help people to overcome the misery of this world and find shelter in Krishna consciousness. So having that as your core value and then of course building on through value teamwork ,make be fully aware that on your own you can do very much so building teams. Time is also a critical factor, managing your time. I'm not very good at it not like my my associate Gopal Bhatta, we work together on is ISKCON online. And I'm very you know, he's really good at managing his time. My mind doesn't work that well. And that, you know, I've just kind of moves around too much. I can't, I find it difficult for me to, to really schedule myself really, really well. But I see the value. So I, you know, I keep trying.

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

Yes, time management I there's a few things I've learned communication skills. One thing that I tried to practice I learned from from Sridhara Swami is just, you know, don't let emails wait, you know, respond, keep somebody communicates even if this to say, I'll get back to you in a in a few days, I'm busy. But try to, you know, people are... Don't let them wait, don't let people sit and, and being very aware of your emotional bank account with people, you know, you, you you have every with every one that you're interacting with, you've got an emotional bank account. And if you if you don't communicate, if you ignore, ignore, but you just you know, you don't or you are too busy or you're not ready to answer whatever. I'm not perfect in this but I I do try to when people communicate to respond right away. That's a skill that I think is important

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?

The core strengths of ISKCON well, number one is fidelity to our founder Acharya that's that's certainly the underlying strength. Without that we're lost but it's not just fidelity to his instructions. But also what we were speaking of before being able to really imbibe his intention and the mission and understand the mission of Krishna conscious the mission of this movement, the deeper we can understand that and how it applies, being able to relate our movement to changing times is essential. And to the extent that we can do that, we're going to find more and more success we have, to some extent, I feel that we've neglected

or failed to really adjust and move with the times and in many places the world we have become irrelevant or difficult to relate to. So we have to look at that. And it may require some adjustment here, some adjustment there, but or may not. I mean, we don't know, you know, just how it has to be done. But the way we do this is through the to.. SP identified what he considered to be the essential requirements for our success. He said, organization and intelligence. So intelligence means things that we've been talking about learning from others, being able to, ask questions and get understand things from people who have get expert opinions and then adapt them use the tools, what distinguishes you will work, we're supposed to be intelligent animals, because of our capacity to use tools, right, so the tools of the modern age, our marketing systems, and Information Systems and internet tools, and all kinds of things are there for us to use, even in these in the fields of agriculture and cow protection, which we were talking about. I'm of the opinion and that our success in these fields will require us to find the tools that modern society has created and adapt them. Certainly the tractor is not one of them for most purposes. But it may be required in some some situations like we can take a hint from the Amish, the Amish, they approach tools and technology, not with completely open mind, they have no preconceived notions that technology is bad, but they evaluate technology to see how it will affect their community. A telephone, for example, means that people will stop going to visit their neighbor, because they'll call them up on the phone. And that will erode their sense of community, a tractor in the field means that the men are less engaged. But to dig a post hole, which is very difficult to do by hand. And you need to maybe do it quickly that you can use a tractor. So they evaluate these things. So we need to evaluate the tools, the systems, the things that are out there to how we can, that's intelligence, and we have to look at organization, what's the character, the character of our organization, the organization the SP, founded was not a very stiff hierarchical organization, but it did have hierarchy along with this spirited, independent, voluntary spontaneous service. So that's another so those two things well, first, we have to understand them. Well, we have to do a lot of, I feel a lot of case studies, we lack case studies, we lack, in my view, in our presentation of things where we can really show Okay, well, this is how this applies. We ,not because theory, we often can understand the theory, okay. But we have difficulty applying it. And when we have more case studies more showing how the showing just exactly how these principles apply in

different situations. I think that might help. Well, we're not so organized. We lack systems for working together on real innovation projects, *I often find that there's a tendency in our movement for people to for the comfort of independence, as opposed to the austerity of collaboration.* But because of that, we're missing out, we don't collaborate as much as we should, or could and thus we find ,more isolated successes as opposed to more broad widespread success. And that I think, and part of that is just, you know, our resistance to change our, our specific mental models, I've heard this from some leaders who have been innovated in, in a specific field, that they don't even publicize what they're doing, because they don't want to deal with people's, you know, misunderstanding. So, that's these are obstacles and they're having great success, but they're not promoting it. And they're not certainly not trying to, to, you know, promote some collaboration. And I think that's, that's unfortunate. Well, I think that, to me, the biggest opportunity is where I'm working ..is that there is a hunger, there's a market, I should say, for what, for the knowledge that we we have, and the practices that we have, particularly in Kirtan and in Japa meditation to a lesser extent, I have to say, in Shastra, our shastras are not, you know, kirtan is easy. Anyone can accept kirtan, there's no need to be. It's an experience that everyone can enjoy, without having to believe anything. And so which is wonderful. And we need to really try to see how we can spread Kirtan. And even Maha mantra meditation is similar. It doesn't require you can get little you can get into it without having a lot of beliefs. Bhagavad Gita on the other hand you can also approach it and you can get it so far but when you start getting into my Srimad Bhagavatam and the core you know Caitanya Caritamrita or something like Nectar of Devotion. I mean these require a for new people generally what I observed is that someone who becomes interested in in our movement unless they're Indian which means they probably have a lot of core things already they know that if they if they don't have that then there's a big leap they have to take to participate in our classes are temple programs are Bhakti Vrikshas are namahattas does most of our programs require people who are very new to our philosophy and practices to kind of jump in and i think that's that's a big problem.

.....Well, we have a threat of being becoming irrelevant but I would say that in any organization like like ours stagnation is the stagnation and fragmentation are the two main threats that we have. If we stagnate, if we don't evolve and

change as as needed, then you know, will dwindle and on the other side, if we do don't address issues that pull us apart, then we'll fragment

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

.....Well, um, well, it's related to my primary fields of service, which are a number I'm involved in a number of things. And the first is my first services is ISKCON online. So in that field, I, I envision a rich environment of online information courses, facilities, and a very vibrant how reach market with using professional marketing using all the things that people are using now to to sell materialism using that all to bring people attract people to Krishna and deliver them Krishna. But at the same time, as all this online environment is developed, that our physical environments our temples, our centers that have proliferated and and diversified into many more neutral environments. *SP in his last year's began talking about promoting and developing neutral environments. He his idea was restaurant and reading room, which you know, is still a very powerful combination. Today we've seen that yoga studio and kind of cafe or hangout place, lounge type of environment has been universally successful.* Wherever people devotees have put energy into this, it people come you build, there's a saying from a movie in America, you build it, they will come and anyway Field of Dreams. But that that type of thing, you know, that's part of the vision. So that's on the one side my other part of my that I area that I'm working at is cow protection and they're the vision is that that all of us are able to access milk and milk products and vegetables and food products that are grown in a system where cows are protected all over the world. And that's a big challenge. Because we have thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands of devotees. And we have two or three of our own farms. So this is this is a huge, huge challenge. But we have to do it, we need to apply very strong strategic planning systems to, to planning this out. But the main ingredient is it we have to have a very strong will. And we have to set a goal this is a, a tool that Vaishesika pr. promotes with great success is you create a target, create a goal and a reachable goal, not something that's out of reach but a goal that you that is realistic, you set that goal and then you work towards it. So I think our society, we need to set a goal that,

okay, five years, we're at this point six years, 10 years, you said 25 years or 25 years to me is a doable goal. Now, it's going to require a change in consciousness in the way we approach the whole topic of farming and agriculture, and cows and so on. And it's going to require a lot of integration between the cities and the countryside, because we're not all moving to the countryside. And so we have to, we have to find how to integrate, we have to adjust in certain areas, we have to get more people involved. But it's all doable. It's all, I mean, it's gonna, it's our finances will have to change we're going to have to, well, firstly, we have to drink and consume a lot less dairy products, unless we're all going to be very rich, because we're accustomed to cheap. It's like buying it in the supermarket at you blood subsidized prices, we can buy a gallon of milk in America for \$3 that's coming from industrial horrible situations. Whereas milk from a farm where the cows are protected. So it will be \$14 a day or something like that. So we have to adjust and probably most of us won't be able to drink as much take as much ice cream and cheese and ghee and all these things, but we'll have enough will have enough is not that there will be no we don't have to become vegans, which is anyways more expensive probably. But we may have to adjust. So it's but it's all together. Well, there's a lot of impediments. I mean, there's the main his main one is, is financial. I think it's just that we but it's not actually it's not the finances. It's the mental model. The mental model is that it doesn't matter that we can go on consuming milk and as long as we're offering it to Krishna, then even though the cows are getting slaughtered and their calves are getting slaughtered, etc, etc. At least their milk is getting offered to Krishna and they're getting blessed. And that may be true. But that's not a reason for us to to not do anything, everything we can to save those cows that are giving us that milk so I think there are some mental models, particularly one of them is also priority that you know, that's Yes, protecting the cows is that it's a lot of work, a lot of effort and meanwhile the people what about the people people are suffering ecology, okay, they're suffering but human beings are suffering just as much and it's our movement is first and foremost SP wanted this but he his main stress was distributing books, etc. So, you know, yes, those who can do it can do it. And it's all great but you know, so priority so it's it's an honor necessarily saying that's right or wrong. But those are the challenges. What's the underlying mental model and values and beliefs that we need to to have well there there's a few things that you know, in the college I believe there's at some point you study

about the four generations about how the first generation SP himself Of course, he's hundred percent clear on his his, his concepts, his issues, his context, the actual the knowledge that he gives me the issues are there the knowledge that he delivers the context of that instructions, instructions and his intention ofcourse, this is all aligned. For us His disciples we have certainly the issues we understand we have the context we've seen the context we received the instructions and hopefully to a certain extent we have grasp of the intentions but even that we don't know we have to explore that because we're not him we you know we have to discover that his intention the third generation is where the second the third generation loses the context they don't have the they didn't have that experience they may also have lost sight of bit of the intention they still have the instructions by the fourth generation many of these things can go. So it's important to take advantage and learn try to understand things from these perspectives while it's possible and take advantage of the books that disciples have written and so on and try to try to understand the intentions of SP when you're looking at his instructions really try to get to the intention and the context.