

Tacit Knowledge Interview

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27 Oct 2017

Q What important instructions and leadership examples of Srila Prabhupada essential to be preserved and shared for the longevity and solidarity of ISKCON into the future?

HH: Well I think to survive as an institution, although SP speak about it, sometimes I say more important than or just as important what he spoke about was his behaviour. Because Prabhupad himself said that example is more important than precept, prabhupad's life embodied, which I think is essential quality for preserving his institution is the ability to respect others. I see that as very fundamental principle taught by LCM himself in his instruction, embodied by SP in his examples and his qualities and his instruction and speech, his letters to his disciples. We have a tendency in our institute to not emphasise need for respect, sometimes when there are opposing views between individual and how to apply SP's instruction, this inability to ****surubably respect opinions of others is destructive. And if we can learn that individually and collectively in a way that more being said more to focus in all our dealings with each other I believe it will help preserve Srila Prabhupad's institution.

Q Do you find any areas of Srila Prabhupada's teachings that are still undeveloped or aspects of his vision for the mission that are yet to be fulfilled? If so what could be done to fulfill the same. What should prioritise now because there are so many things which SP said.

HH: I personally embrace as one of the most important priority for the welfare of ISKCON today and for successful continuation in future generations, is the emphasis on need to study his books. I believe that many devotees who coming to our society now if they are going to be our future, are not sufficiently educated, not always and not all places but in many places I find insufficient desire to know SP. I think greatest danger for ISKCON presently and future is not to know SP personality and his teachings, if too much emphasis is given on current leaders and their personalities, their instructions, their qualities without first inculcating within their followers a desire to know more about SP, that will lead to us to degradation of society. I am not necessarily saying that devotees are not reading books and not necessarily saying that only by reading books we can know SP. I think 1st generation disciples of SP have very very imp responsibility to give SP to their dependents by speaking about him realization about him and preserving SP's mood as he taught in his books, which devotees have learned, so much more emphasis has to be there on SP instructions given in his books and his personality and I defiantly feel that every devotee in KC movement must have read at-least read once if not if not many times prabhupad lilamrta full volumes from beginning to end.

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.

HH: Personal practice means Sadhana? As leaders I think one of the personal practices that I have tried very hard to be consistent in my practices in my desire to hear from others and to hear others. As a leader, all leaders have responsibility to sit down and hear concerns of others and sometimes there is tendency to be in leadership position to feel that I can immediately understand this person, I don't need to listen to what they have to say or you can give them solution. And I found that many times it is more effective in giving them solution just by hearing them then by trying to impose what you may think is solution which does not touch their hearts. So to avoid that phenomenon as it is important responsibility for leaders to be able to hear from their dependents and to hear their concerns and to see that others are having difficulty in their own KC. To be a leader in KC and preacher means that we have to share someone's responsibility for others difficult because I am supposed to be preacher that means that I am supposed to help those who are around me and those who are hearing me and if they are not advancing then there must be something lacking in me as well. Rather than simply find fault with the person who is having difficulties I think we also have to look within ourselves to see if I possibly contributed to this individual or groups, forums**** that they are having and also try to improve myself.

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:

What were the key success factors in terms of leadership and managerial decisions or approaches which contributed to the success of the project?

HH: If it is successful it is not because of me that's for sure my realization, if it is successful then it is because prabhupad wanted it. So I am simply serving but it is not because of me. If it is successful because devotees understood how much prabhupad wanted it and therefore executed it in a way that is pleasing to him, my business is to be transparent and not to get an ***9:40 of devotee's enthusiasm to serve prabhupad and I don't see that I cannot at-least attribute anything successful simply to myself. I believe that there has been lot of success in the areas where I am preaching but I can give like for instance my own experience of preaching in former soviet union in early days I often time use to tell devotees that by going there I found that devotee had very strong inclination to hear and they really really enthusiastic to hear from me. And I don't think it is necessary that I was such a good speaker but their desire to hear was so strong that Krishna was reciprocating with their desire and I was simply getting caught in crossfire, I happened to be at the right place at the right time so that my experience in many respects and in many places where I do preaching,

wherever devotees have very strong desire to hear then I feel encouraged and inspired to speak and I try to speak in such a way that reflects prabhupad's mood and help devotees connect with prabhupad's desires and his vision for spreading KC. And I believe that what SP taught that his examples he taught which inspires me the most of how the transparent he was in spreading KC and he was always simply conscious of his subordinate position and relationship to instructions given to him by his spiritual master and because I am so inspired by prabhupad's example then I respect and try to practice it myself and see that wherever I am able to at-least practice that, there is some success. So I look to myself to be such a effective manager and infect I believe the weather areas which are more successful and places where I do have responsibility. I believe that its more successful because I am not managing and I am learning how to manage. And I guess may be that can be seen as something I strongly believe in that it is empowering others to take up responsibility and giving them sense of empowerment and support and loving them if necessary, make some mistakes and learning (making) them learn from their mistakes by showing and demonstrating willingness to still give them my support to spite****13:00 wherever small mistake they may have and I try to correct then in a way that maintains their integrity and responsibility that they have in their service so I say to some degree that's what Sp did. And because prabhupad had who he had to spread the KC movement and looking at myself and from testimonial from many of my god-brothers and god-sisters many have also expressed that look what SP had to work with, we are not so qualified but look at what he did with his monkey army and just because he entrusted upon us a big responsibilities and he gave faith it could be done and we tried to please him. So I try to follow that mood.

Q Which leadership values should be included in the training for future ISKCON leaders?

HH: I believe that leaders in our movement are sometimes forced to wear two hats meaning they have to manage and they have to be spiritual leader concerned about the individual spirit and growth of everybody who is dependent upon. Sometimes it is not very easy to fulfil both functions simultaneously and therefore you may find somebody more stronger inclination towards managing. And because he had strong inclination towards management, he is looked like leader and his management is more based upon a desire to manage people, manage money, manage assets, forgetting that this is a voluntary movement and because of voluntary movement you can't really manage anybody unless people come forward with voluntary spirit to do it. We are not supposed to be paying people we are supposed to inspiring them, more important than just managing people and resources is that there is need to inspire them and that is where spiritual leadership comes, yes sometimes there can be very inspirational, to be very well organized manager but still people need to be motivated and the motivation comes from ones strength one's own personal sadhana, motivation to others come through message that one gives and his preaching and by his own example, so as I said difficulty with leaders is sometimes they

have to wear two hats and generally have to know when to put on managers' hat and when to put on spiritual leadership hat because sometimes unfortunately I have seen our leaders keep manager hat on in dealing with individuals when it should be taken off and spiritual leader hat should be put on. And said instead to take consideration what is the best for individual and not what is best for the institution. And I think all of our leader should know the art of when to wear which hat and whom to apply according to time place and circumstances.

Q Which leadership skills should be included in the training for future ISKCON leaders?

HH: I think it came with my previous answer that we are leaders for somebody who is not just simply a manager and real leader is somebody who understands it as important as preaching is teaching by their examples. We should be very careful not to force others to do what we ourselves are not doing. But rather than forcing them, I often time I use the example – I was using this example with parents recently they are trying to teach their children to do things that they feel if children won't do it then they feel guilty and their lives may become misdirected and they won't become devotees. I tried to emphasize them that getting children to do thing that you want to do means that you have to share your enthusiasm for those activities and not force them to do those activities this is difference. Many times our leaders try to force devotees to perform certain activities which they feel is very important but more important is to share our enthusiasm for those activities that we ourselves are doing. So by sharing our enthusiasm for those activities it is more inspirational than force. This is the quality that needs to be taught. Not that he has to be expert in keeping books not he has to be so expert in corporate management and that is my greatest fear for ISKCON in future. I don't know if that question will come up at any point but my greatest fear for future is that we will become too much absorbed in corporate management and we will lose sense of individual spiritual growth of ISKCON's members.

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?
SWOT

HH: Strength fortunately is our leader's ability to continue to cooperate according to Srila Prabhupad's desires in global mission I believe that is our strength. And that strength comes from our love to Prabhupad. And because that love is so prevalent in hearts of many of those who not only Srila Prabhupad's first generation disciples but I believe many of our leaders have been successful in impacting Srila Prabhupad into the lives of their dependents that gives us strength against Maya and to be effective in KC and that gives strength to keep our movement together. There is always risk that we may lose that strength, therefore I

think caution we should take is to never forget the importance of keeping Srila Prabhupad in forefront our hearts and all the devotees, both first generation and future generations.

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?

HH: I believe one of the weaknesses that has evolved over the year. One which is pronounced in my mind is temple life. I believe and observed in many places that the way we lived in temple in srila prabhupad's manifest presence of the spirit of temple being point of focus and lives of devotees who live in the temple and congregation outside temple. I believe our weakness is ISKCON out of focus. I believe we become too much festival oriented and which is nice this value***24:00 festivals but if the core members of our society survive are active only on one festival to the next and in between the festivals they are virtually not even visible then we really miss the prabhupad's mood and I believe that it is our weakness now that we are not able to retain same spirit of both temple lifestyle, temple support from the congregation and a very high standard of deity worship that srila prabhupad expected in the temple which he himself personally establish in his physical presence I find it very disappointing to see deities being worshiped for instance by first and uninitiated devotees, cooks are uninitiated devotees and I believe that there could be many reasons, much beyond the scope of answer that I would give at this point. Too much licence for home worship is one problem, not enough emphasis on temple worship of deities is weakness and I am concerned about future.

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?

Biggest opportunities to capitalizes on I say biggest opportunity we should capitalize are fact that people are suffering more than ever and we should capitalize it and give them a positive alternative that what Srila Prabhupad did. It is Prabhupad who emphasised how KC is a positive alternative. We have to look how people are suffering in their day to day life and we have to try to awake them to the understanding to the ways they can improve their lives by adding KC to their lives. I think that is a big opportunity everywhere I go, I always meeting people and always hearing how people are looking for alternative ways to live and I don't think we are capitalizing on that. Temple in some instances may not be answer for these people I definitely advocate finding different avenues and finding opportunities to reach out the people outside the temple venue, but I believe that our goal should be whatever way we bring them from outside venues we should always bring them and continue to bring them to the Temples. And should not be so absorbed in establishing the institutes and organization, I guess that is called bridge preaching. Example I often times

gives that efforts devotee do make to establish bridge preaching programs that sometimes we see that too much emphasis on bridge itself and people forget that bridge is supposed to bring people to the other side otherwise what is the value of bridge that does not bring people to other side. We should capitalize on such opportunities that many people are looking for different paradigm then they are currently living in. We should show them that there is different paradigm.

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?

Biggest treat to movement I see is when spiritual leaders try to become institutions onto themselves and forget to be spiritual leader in SP's ISKCON means you always must be subordinate members to the leaders and you should teach your followers and dependents to be active participants in Srila prabhupad's mission and not to have separate institution which may mislead one's own followers or strong preachers to think that does it needs (**29:00) to be member of that institute is sufficient in itself. I see it as biggest threat. I see that potentially becoming to sectarian and I see that that is becoming a source of significant division in future at ISKCON unless it is checked. That potential is checked before it is above our head.

By too much fear of corporate approach I simply meant is that we become more absorbed in preserving institution and forgetting about individual needs of the members. I call it a putting a form over a substance, if you have very nice form, a shall and inside it is hollow then it will collapse without substance what is the value of form? That's why in the same way if we become too much absorbed in corporate ISKCON which is more emphasis on form then danger is to be less focused on substance. And substance means individual spiritual growth of members in terms of their sadhana in terms of their own spiritual practices and in terms of their own growth and evolution of KC which is something that SP definitely wanted for all of his followers to become KC and to become qualified to go back to godhead. I don't necessarily see that simply having a corporate ISKCON will give everyone opportunity to back to godhead. I believe in substance. We always have to be careful not to deemphasise the substance in the name of form.

Q: 3. Please visualize your dream vision for a very successful worldwide ISKCON movement 25 years from now.

- a. What all do you see in that vision?
- b. What do you think we need to do to be able to get there? (In the sense that any adjustments in the current administrative structures/ socio-cultural ecosystem of ISKCON.) (eg. Clear organizational roles and responsibilities)
- c. What are some of the obstacles/ impediments we might face in reaching there?

HH: I see that 25 yrs from now means that probably everyone who is currently sitting in GBC body probably won't be there so I would like to see GBC body consistent of members who

imbibed a spirit of SP's 1st generation followers and have at least once read every single book of SP, and have read all SP's letters, have read everything about SP. I believe if we have body of individual governing the society who have the spirit then I see hope for the future. If we don't bring into the GBC which SP wanted for the continuation of ISKCON, he wanted it to be managed by governing body commission and if we do not have individual in that governing body with vision of that quality then I shatter****(34:00) to think what ISKCON would be like, I wanted to make it clear that that I am not in any way saying that there will never be another person in SP's ISKCON who would be such a fortunate*** (34:30) leader who can inspire the whole society. I certainly hope that there would be some guarding lights for the future in SP's movement who may even become individually a source of spiritual strength and who may manifest in SP's movement in future to be that guiding light for his ISKCON I would be happy to see it but it is not there now, at-least none of us recognized him so therefore SP did want GBC and in absence of such a personality then GBC I would like to see consisting of people who would know everything about SP.

Socio-cultural Ecosystem of ISKCON You would like to see in community

HH: Certainly I would like to see communities, I won't call them Varnashram communities; but they are Varnashram communities but we still studying Varnashram and by now we feel that anybody yet has provided the complete blue print, SP gave us foundation for sure and you can say that something we are not been able to come upto is something that SP wanted as manifested. I defiantly would like to see more ruler communities with devotees engaged in worship of deities as centre of their communities and with devotees working in self sufficient communities and teaching by their ideal examples again how to live simple life that SP often times emphasised simple living and high thinking. We in many respect have failed to establish such communities and I believe that 25 Yrs from now if we can come to that standard not only for our temples in cities but temples in rural areas such a communities for families where they can raise their children, where they can grow good and protect cows and where they can attract people to that positive alternative which I spoke about before what was SP really wanted to people to see that this is the positive alternative to live is this type of lifestyle with Krishna in centre. Yes, I would certainly like to see places of that nature as well.

Q: What about Devotee Care?

HH: Yes, I do emphasise about devotee care, I think that goes without saying, I guess I should have probably represented my point of view that I should have blown my horn if that expression is used on the topic of devotee care, I spoke about it indirectly you can say, by saying that we should have a type of leaders who care for devotees more than just simply leading a institution so I did speak about it but I did not used the word 'devotee care'. But I think if you go back and reflect many thinks that I already said you see that the devotee care was very intrinsic pact of everything that I was speaking about, infect recently I have written introduction to a book on devotee care, a book written in Russian and for devotees

in Ukrain. In my introduction I gave the example that in 1970s when I grew up in ISKCON you never heard words 'devotee care', it was never talked about but the point I made in introduction was just that although what in discuss as a department or as a initiative or something that needed to be taken care of, devotee care in those days was something like that was built in. It was built in feature that I experienced and I grew up in, it is because SP was always demonstrating by his example. So answer to question is that I believe all the points I have said were spoken in mood of devotee care I just did not used the words. I believe that our leaders definitely as I said have to be capable of wearing the devotee care hat or spiritual leader hat and making decisions in terms of what is in the best interest of devotees wherein the what is in the best interest or immediate need for the institution I believe that is very important element of devotee care. And without caring of devotee you won't have a voluntary movement.