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Q. What important instructions and leadership examples of Srila Prabhupada do you feel should be preserved and shared for the longevity and solidarity of ISKCON into the future? (eg. Your love will be shown by how you cooperate, SP participating as one of the GBC members.)

So everyone is familiar with this story of how once SP called Giriraj Swami late one very night about 3 o'clock at night and Giriraj Maharaj was surprised at this late hour what SP would expect of him and SP asked Giriraj Maharaj that "Do you think this movement will go on?" Giriraj said "Yes. As long as we follow the sadhana, we chant, this movement will go on SP." So SP said it requires intelligence and organization. So SP was actually very astute. He was a visionary and he planned his mission. He had worked many many years before going to America in very meticulous details. Because he had prepared so well, he was able to get very highly successful results. SP was very sensitive to the needs of his devotees. In any organization, the most valuable asset is the manpower- in our case the devotee power. So one anecdote I would like to share with the audience that at the time of the opening of the SP's Palace of Gold in New Vrindavan before that the devotees took SP just for a trip to show him all the arrangements that were being made and at that time some of the devotees were very curious to know if in this age it would be practical to have illumination in the palace by jewels instead of electricity. This is very well known that in Dwarka, the palaces were lit by jewels- there was no electricity in those days. So the devotees' very heartfelt desire they had to illuminate SP's palace with jewels. So they asked SP "Can we in this age also illuminate your palace with jewels?" And SP gave a very heart-touching reply which will touch everyone's heart. SP said "*All of you my followers, are jewels.*" So SP really valued each and every devotee just like Krishna values each and every devotee. This is said by Sudama in the 10th Canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam that even if a devotee does a very insignificant service or makes an insignificant offering to Krishna, Krishna thinks that "Oh he's so great, he has done so much for me" and

on the other hand, Krishna will do so much for the devotee but Krishna will feel I did nothing for my poor devotee.

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.

I think we have to, as an on-going process, continue on building devotee relationships and we are seeing time and again, devotees out of frustration with the management, it may not necessarily be the fault of the management, but is communication gap. Some sort of miscommunication with the management. We have seen actually in the past during the days of the zonal acharya system, so many devotees were removed unnecessarily. Many devotees left because they felt very uncomfortable to work within ISKCON. That's not to say necessarily that the devotees are all innocent. The devotees may also have shortcomings but expert members would know how to handle such a situation. The other day I was just reading an example of how Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, when one brahmachari he had a slight fall-down or maybe even a major fall-down with some woman and the other disciples of Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati removed him. So Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati asked them, where is that particular brahmachari? So they told him he was not upto the particular level so we removed him. Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati was very disturbed about this. He said "No, please go and look for him." As it happened, somehow they found that brahmachari, and the brahmachari himself revealed that he was just praying to Krishna when will my Guru Maharaj call me back? Like that, we have to be very sensitive to the devotees.

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.

I think the association of devotees has helped me a lot. This is a very powerful movement and it brings out confidence in the individuals- devotees. SP himself,

he had always set very high goals. Once- this is a small anecdote which I would like to share- one reporter asked SP that your movement is going on quite well I see, do you see any problems or anything? SP in a very nice mood he said “I have one problem, that I can only think big, I can never think small.” So, I have seen that many leaders have imbibed this mood from SP. I wish I would imbibe it more as this is a very healthy disease. SP said this is a disease but this is a very healthy disease. Wish I could have that disease. And I’ve seen many devotees also imbibe this from SP. *SP said that there is nothing impossible in this world.* Impossible in a fool’s dictionary. We have to set the goals and ultimately as the shastra goes ‘mukam karoti vachalam’ a person who has unflinching faith in his guru can achieve miracles and we have seen how our devotees are being empowered, getting astounding, some days mind-boggling results, achievements.

Q Please recount your best and most successful projects (or initiatives) during your tenure as leader/GBC

So the most important aspect of any project as I also mentioned earlier is the manpower- team spirit. Unless we have that team-spirit, no project will really take off and we could see that SP was a genius in engaging people of all levels. A person who had never known anything about printing except maybe just reading a BTG turned out to be great BTG or BBT managers later on. SP would always push. So in my experience in Vrindavan, we had a good team, we built up a good team and this was part of the reason that the was quite successful. I stayed many years in Vrindavan. *Hence the most important aspect is team-building.*

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

I think both things have to go side by side- the training and classrooms have to be there. At the same time, personal instructions, personal training of devotees, leaders by the seniorly devotees is also necessary. Just like SP, those days there

was no GBC College or other institutions although SP did follow very meticulously the principles of management. I just read in one book that in SP's diary, SP mentions 'To-do list'. He has made a To-do list and this is photographed also. So that means he was very meticulous. He knew exactly what to do. He would keep a record of each and every penny that he spent. He was very meticulous. It was not that because he was a very highly elevated spiritual master that he was negligent in these principles of so-called ordinary, it's not ordinary actually. Management is also a part of KC. It is a very essential part of KC and we're very happy that, we're are very thankful that the GBC College has taken this initiative to train our future leaders because as time goes on and on, these principles have to be imbibed and these principles are actually very important for us to know and to understand and apply in our life. For instance, one famous philosopher has said that the minute you make up your mind to do something, then the forces of nature will act in that way to supplement you, to support you and all of a sudden things will work in your favour, in your support. On the other hand, there is a saying that the *luck favours the prepared person*. If you are prepared or you're making some preparations, then luck will favour you. It's much more important for us to spend time preparing things rather than repairing things. This is inevitably what's happening. *Many times, we don't take the time to prepare then we end up repairing*. A famous story or episode is one boy was chiselling some wood with an axe, striking it again and again. But he didn't get very far as the blade of the axe was not sharp. So someone told him "Stop doing this, you'll never be able to cut this. Sharpen this axe first." "I don't have the time to sharpen it" the foolish boy said and he kept on doing it. He couldn't do it. Someone showed him how to do it- to sharpen it and he was able to cut it. Just take the time out to sharpen.

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

First is humility. You must have this quality of humility and also we must be very sincere. Even though we maybe lacking in other qualifications, we may not be

very big big managers like in the corporate world but if we have that basic quality of sincerity, then Krishna is all powerful. He will take us to that level but that quality of sincerity has to be there. So one devotee has, senior devotee, explained what this word 'sincere' means. It comes from the Latin word Sincerus that means actually in Latin that mean 'without any adulteration'. What happened was, in the old days, the Latin people once were very fond of marble statues and so on. But the craftsmen, they didn't always use top quality materials. Sometimes there would be some holes or scratches in that and they would fill the hole with wax and wax in Latin is known as 'sina' and 'cera' means without. So these persons who wanted to buy that, they would instruct the craftsmen 'sine cera' without wax. We want original marble without wax- that's how they were sincere. So, point being that we should be very sincere that we want to serve Krishna even though there are many- we do not have many qualifications, we have many bad habits from past life and all that but if we have this one quality of sincerity, we will make a lot of advancement. *So we mentioned 3, one is humility, one is sincerity and one is consistency.* You must be very consistent with our teachings what we have learnt. We should be very expert in team-building. Every organization- a team will either make it or break it. *Team-building is most important aspect. Hardwork and also confidence in oneself.* These things are necessary if we want to succeed in any endeavour. We must put naturally hardwork. Without hard work, you may have other qualities but if you don't work hard, no-one has been able to achieve success without hardwork. Team-building and becoming aware of the latest technology. In today's age, we have to become familiar with the systems that are in vogue. We cannot keep on being very sentimental and neglecting these technological advancements. We have to keep in touch with it. We have to have these computer skills and technological skills.

Q Organizational SWOT for today's ISKCON

1. 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?

2. 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?

3. 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?

4. 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 greatest strength that we have is that this movement is based on Shastra.

So this is invincible. No person on this Earth can deny that. This is the strongest point that we have that whatever we have is according to the Shastras. That's our biggest strength. And that also is passed down in disciplic succession, bonafide disciplic succession- guru parampara. The other strengths that we have is the ever-growing manpower of ISKCON. Even during SP's time, there was lot of preaching going on, there were many devotees but the devotees are expanding now. More temples are being opened so we have this ISKCON Leadership Sangha that our motto is '*More Devotees Happier Devotees*' and we are in progress on that. I think SP answered this question very well because he himself had asked Giriraj Maharaj that do you think this movement will go on. I maybe paraphrasing a little bit but that was the gist of the question. *And Giriraj Swami said certainly as long as we follow the principles and chant, the movement will go on. SP said it requires intelligence and organization. So we have to do things very intelligently. And I was just reading yesterday also Planning is very important. Sometimes we take this for granted. We leave it upto Krishna. That's true, ultimately everything depends on Krishna but Krishna also wants us to use our intelligence to make plans. I was just reading yesterday that a foolish person who makes plans is much better than an intelligent person who makes no plans.* These opportunities which are now springing up is that in many cases the leaderships- the political leaders are also becoming very favourable. In the beginning, especially in India there was lot of opposition to ISKCON. When I first came to India in 1977, there was a lot of opposition to ISKCON. There was this Dev Ananda's infamous song 'Dum Maaro Dum' that we

are all hippies and also we were being- charges that we are CIA agents of all things like that. I remember one incident I was preaching in Chennai. I was at the BBT Library distributing Bhagavatam sets and at one college I approached some students and they were totally atheistic and all followers of Darwin and when we started to preach about our KC, they would not accept it at all, they would only speak of Darwin and not rationally also. But they were so aggressive that at one point we had to just- we were in a van, sankirtan van. We had to just run in the van and go away- they were so dangerous. And here in Hare Krishna Land also, what a struggle it was to start in the place and even after the opening, there were so many problems. SP was always on top of the situation. At the present we are now in Bombay in the middle of this 40th Anniversary, I just read SP's Lilamrita that SP was actually in Mauritius- he had accident and he was planning to come back immediately to Bombay. The reason why he wanted to come to Bombay was that he heard some- he had got some reports that people said that some devotees had told that there was lot of stealing going on here with the connamments of the architects, the contractor, the security guards and many other people- so many materials and SP was actually fasting- he would not eat food, the devotees asked SP you'll become very weak you're not eating and SP said- just see the dedication SP had. And SP said, "how can I eat when my temple is being stolen? People are stealing my money." I think SP has answered this question much better than I could ever answer that question. SP said *"There is no force in this world which can stop our movement" and we are seeing that.* In Russia, the KGB could not break our movement. Elsewhere also in Pakistan, Africa, many places- they tried to break our movement and in America- there were these episodes were going on in Bombay regarding Mr. N. There was another case going on in America about brainwashing which was a very serious case but it came in our favour and SP said that you know he was really very happy about it. This will be very good preaching for us. Sometimes when we have lot of opposing elements- *Preaching means that there will be opposition. We are attacking Maya's kingdom.* So the treats that I see- SP also mentioned, SP is also mentioned is from that it is from within us.. SP used to tell this story of the person who had many wooden twigs, branches. Once they were tied. He asked his son to open it, no one could break it. Separately very easy to

break so as long as we are united, follow his message. He mentions we must follow that principles. He keeps on coming back to the purpose- follow the principles, dedicated and SP said that your love for me will be shown by how much you cooperate amongst each other when I'm not with you. And in our GBC Course, we were informed how that saying came to be. There was one devotee- I don't recall his name right now who went after SP one time and said *"SP, I would give my life for you. I'm so happy with you, I'm so impressed with your preaching, your mannerism, your devotion, your humility, I'm ready to give my life for you."* And then SP told to him *"If you really love me, then your love will be shown by how much, when I'm not there, you cooperate with amongst each others. Some paraphrasing maybe there but that was the gist of it."*

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

As in any association, in every organisation, we have to pass the baton in very consistent manner, in a very mature manner so this is partly what the GBC College is doing- training the future leaders and we also serve. Like SP- he trained so many leaders and his leaders have trained up the next generation so this is our responsibility to society. We are all getting older now so we have to train up the next cadre and we have to be very merciful to them. Whatever we did learn from SP and whatever we did learn from the classes of the GBC and whatever information we've gathered which we can use in KC, we must use. Sometimes devotees are shy to read books by other authors but if it helps us to promote management or to develop our management skills, there's nothing wrong in that, rather we should use those skills. As SP said, it requires organization and intelligence. More devotees, happier devotees- that's one vision to summarise it all. *If the devotees are satisfied, that would be the success of this movement.* Not only more,more but happy also. *Actually only Krishna can make us happy so we have to satisfy Krishna so without KC, our endeavors to become happy will be futile.* So we follow what SP has said to the best of our abilities, always remain very humble, never think that we are very big devotees. From Krishna's point of view, Krishna sees every devotee as very valuable. SP

also saw every devotee as valuable but we also should think that *we are very insignificant- always cultivate this habit of humility, of repentance for our previous sinful activities and always pray for the mercy of Krishna. There's nothing stronger than that.* Management and other things maybe an aid but ultimately it is the mercy of the Lord and that mercy we'll get by being humble. *Our acharyas have shown this- it's humility that's our strength, our real strength.* When devotee like Prahlada says that "I was born in the family of sinful demons." Although we know that Prahlada was not sinful but he had that mentality and we have to have that mentality that we have been very sinful but Krishna has been very kind to us.