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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?

Well I think that the basic structure that we already have was set up by SP. He established the GBC as the final authority. Any organization to be successful has to have a clear structure and there has to be a final authority. SP knew that. So we're already doing that to some extent. We see that people that have fabricated or deviated from that structure, then the preaching becomes disrupted, they also personally become useless but the strength in numbers- SP was very clear that the basic principle of Lord Chaitanya's movement is co-operation. It doesn't matter how individually qualified anybody is but unless they co-operate together, then the true success will not be realized. SP had many god-brothers that were qualified as he in terms of shastra or in terms of practice and purity but because they missed that point of co-operation, the whole Gaudiya Mission was dissipated. But ISKCON is growing and continues to grow because there is a hierarchy called structure and we do have clear guidelines on what's acceptable, what's not acceptable. So I think that we are headed in the right direction in that respect- that's the main point

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, clearly we haven't fulfilled SP's hopes and expectations as far as organizing human society in general through *Varnashram*. Without the *Varnashram* system, it's not civilized human life. So, some how or the other we have to find a way of implementing that. The modern trend is that to make people so called equal but actually according to the *Varnashram* system, there

are different kinds of characteristics that human beings have- Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. You can't force Brahmanas to be Shudras, you can't force Shudras to be Kshatriyas- if you do, the whole thing becomes topsy turvy which we see in human society. The trend nowadays is towards so called equality- that bringing so many laws, hate laws, hate crime or whatever they call it. But the fact is that people are different on a material platform- they need to be shown how to harness the different natures that they have towards the common goal- that goal is spiritual because there's a misunderstanding about the real nature of the living being- that we're not this body then there's no question of being able to organize human society successfully. Everybody wants equality but nobody knows what the platform of equality actually is. There's simultaneous oneness and difference- we're one in respect to the fact that we're all spirit souls-we're not the body. The differences are that whilst we're in the material world, we're affected by the three modes of nature and therefore there are different characteristics for each, at least, human being and how to combine the two- equalness and difference, that they don't know but that's actually one of ISKCON's main goals- to demonstrate civilized human life in terms of *Varnashram*. So we haven't got very much progress in that respect at the moment- maybe that'll come as the movement gets more expanded and accepted and more influential. In the meantime SP said that we should practice or display the *Varnashram* system within ISKCON, not that we need it as Vaishnavas, but outside people need to see what true cooperation and organization can be achieved. So there's a structure for that- it's not something whimsical but it's very clearly defined in the Vedic literature. Krishna says very clearly *catur-varnyam maya srstam guna-karma-vibhagasah* so based on *guna* and *karma* not in terms of birth, it's in terms of actual practice and quality of work. So I think the main thing ISKCON has to look at now is how to demonstrate *Varnashram* system. There's an old saying in the West that if you build a better mousetrap, the world will beat a path to your door. So if we can show how to live peacefully and cooperatively, despite the fact that we all have different natures, then gradually in the chaos of so called modern industrial civilization, it may stand out as an example for people to adopt and follow.

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 the main principles and practices I've always hung onto is you know, following SP's instructions to the best I can. I haven't always done that. We have experience that as soon as we deviate from SP's basic program, you know, 4 regulative principles, chanting Hare Krishna then immediately we start having problems because we become overwhelmed by the lower of modes of passion and ignorance. That causes tremendous disruption. So we want to establish a brahminical society and personally you know, I've had ups and downs, serious ones sometimes. But what always kept me going is having that complete faith that what SP said philosophically and what he demonstrated practically- that's the best platform and the solid platform that always has a positive effect. So it's simple really. Somebody once asked SP about why some of his leaders GBCs were falling down and having problems- this was in the early 70s. They were the leaders that SP had appointed and who people looked upto and suddenly you know, they were gone. So the question was why is that that these GBCs and leaders- and SP said that leader means 4 regulative principles and chanting 16 rounds that's all and the problems came when they were weak and ignored that or everything else that we're doing ISKCON is based on purity and that means avoiding those 4 simple activities- platforms of simple activity and chanting the holy names as much as possible that transforms the heart. If you don't transform the consciousness, the behaviour obviously will reflect that. Again an example that SP gave was that you know, that a dog will lick your shoes- so if you put a dog on the king's throne, it'll still get down and lick your shoes because he has that kind of nature. So nature has to be purified then only the things that you want to do will come automatically but if we're not following a pure platform, then we'll only end up with some material chaos.

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

Well over the years, I think the main thing that I've learnt is the importance of hearing from others. In hierarchical structure is very easy to get into us the scenario where the guy on top orders the guy below what to do but actually that's not the way that SP managed. SP was our charrier and he could tell us whatever he wanted us to do and we would do our best to you know, execute that but SP would not force a person to do something that he was not naturally attracted to or had the capability of doing. He always tried to see that people were situated in a comfortable position- some way of working they were familiar with because that way they would maintain their enthusiasm. *He said many many times that utsaha enthusiasm is the key principle in making advancement.* So he was very expert in keeping people's enthusiasm at a high level. Even if they weren't very qualified or if they've done something wrong, he would always try to maintain their enthusiasm to go on and improve. So we have to do that. Any manager's success depends on how well he can motivate and maintain the enthusiasm of the people that he's working with. So that requires a little maturity and especially requires the ability to hear from the other persons that you're working with- what are their needs, what are their ideas, consider them very carefully. Not talk down to them but draw out from them what their ideas are because everybody's got the supersoul in their heart and anybody's capable of coming up with good ideas and if you can get a person motivated on the basis of what they like to do or what they're expert at, you get the most out from them in that way. But if you order and demand and command them the end result will be that people will become disgusted. So over the years I found that whatever project that I've been working on, if I am willing to give the time to genuinely sit and listen to what their concerns are then most of the difficulties that are involved can easily be adjusted for and they'll go on and do unexpectedly good things. But if we don't properly hear from people then nothing good will come of it.

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

Well I think it should be compulsory for anybody who wants to be a leader in ISKCON that they must have at least 2 years out on the streets selling SP's books. When you go out for book distribution, you meet all kinds of people from all walks of life and you develop an understanding of what they are, what their needs are, how to communicate with them properly, how to convince them of the message that you are bringing. And above all it helps to regulate your senses, train the mind because when you're out on book distribution on the streets, you really have to control your mind- that's a key factor. So I've seen all too often that somebody with some material expertise, some you know, what's the word... some material ability because they have a certain ability in a certain area, they immediately get put into some big position where they have influence over other devotees because of that material expertise but they are unsuccessful because they don't really have the background of you know, controlling the senses, controlling the mind, clearing the intelligence- they're coming in on a material platform on material expertise but our expertise is derived from surrender- surrender to the spiritual master, surrender to his instruction- that surrender comes from controlling the mind and the sense- subduing them and the best way to do that is to get out on book distribution. It's very very powerful- you get direct reciprocation from the Supersoul and from SP or from your own particular Guru because it's an austerity. Performance of austerity is one of the key factors *vairagya vidya nitya bhakti yoga*. This *Vairagya* leads to *Vidya* to knowledge, to realisation. So everybody if we're going to maintain this institution, this preaching institution- the leaders themselves must have practical experience of getting out in the field and talking to the ordinary people, not sitting like some bureaucrat in some office and ordering everybody else to go here and go there. You really need to get out and experience what it's like to meet with ordinary people and to find out what kind of lives they're living, what their needs are, etc. etc. That way then, you'll develop very deep understanding of human nature, you'll be able to inspire

others and you'll be able to make rapid advancement. SP always said that if you want to advance quickly then go out and preach and the main preaching is distributing SP's books. So I'd like to see that made an absolute rule that nobody can occupy any position of authority where they have power over other people's lives unless they've done at least 2 years out on the streets just selling SP's books.

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

Ohh the same principle- hearing and chanting. Communication is a two-way street- not that I tell you and that's it I don't bother hearing back from you. That will not be successful. We're all individuals- SP said that- there's a letter that he sent to Atreya Rishi Prabhu I think in 1974 where he said that we're not after Utopia where everybody agrees on everything. That kind of- I haven't seen the letter that was written to SP but it's clear that Atreya was concerned that there were disagreements amongst the devotees but SP wrote back and he said that we're not after utopia. Utopia means Mayavada. Everything is one, everything is the same, there's no differentiation. That's not Krishna Consciousness. KC manifests in the fact that everybody is different. So we're all different, we have different ways of seeing things but we unite towards a common goal and we cooperate together to achieve that goal. So we celebrate the fact that there are different opinions and we should respect those different opinions, we should hear those different opinions and then combine together to come to a common conclusion- that will make the leadership group strong and powerful.

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 core strength of ISKCON or ISKCON members is simply following the four regulative principles, chanting the Hare Krishna mantra as much as possible, purifying the heart. You have no strength unless you have purity. There's no question of being strong in anything if you're not pure. Then whatever you do, if there's no principle of purity, everything becomes just material manifestation. You may become expert in building buildings, making money like a businessman, etc. etc. but you cannot convince people or transform the hearts of people through external means. Internally there has to be purification that anything you wanted to do as SP said, your management will be at your fingertips if you follow these 4 principles and chant the Hare Krishna mantra on a regular basis- that's all, it's a simple thing, it's not complicated. Well it's hard to talk about ISKCON today because it varies in so many different areas. As long as the basic program that SP gave is emphasized then even if there are shortcomings, they'll be adjusted for. It's a common standard among all ISKCON temples- we have our morning program- SP devices that as a means for absorbing the mind and the senses in Krishna right from the time you wake up at least for 3-4 hours. So the purification of the consciousness is there and then whatever weaknesses and shortcomings we have, that'll be gradually worked out by the sincere devotees practicing KC in the way that SP gave us or told us to do. You'll never get to a point where all the weaknesses and difficulties are dealt with. This is the material world- things are always changing, there's always challenges but that's a good thing. Challenge means that then you have to out, you have to work harder, you have to try harder, you have to rely on Krishna more and that will have a very powerful effect on changing other people's consciousness. But the principle of co-operation is always the mainstay. If we cooperate together then those differences or weaknesses or shortcomings- they all will easily be dealt with. Biggest opportunities- I don't know. Who can say in the modern age- SP started with a small storefront- now we have a 100 Centres

big and small. So who can say what the future's gonna hold? Maybe at some point SP did speak about having Krishna Conscious countries where the leadership, devotees and they inspire or induce the populations of their countries to be devotees. That's one of our aims- we want to transform human society. So, as opportunities come up, we are opportunists. SP said that any slight little way in which we can inject KC whatever platform it maybe, we should try it. So this is the ground of approach which is going out, selling books to the ordinary people on the streets and then there's the top-down approach- trying to convince society's leadership that they need to introduce principles of KC if they want to have a peaceful and prosperous society. So either way, I mean, in India we have got some advantage- we do have some connection with the top politicians- they do appreciate what ISKCON is trying to do- they do try to facilitate it and we should draw on their goodwill more and more and more. There's other places where the country's leadership hate us- they don't want us there. Maybe other organizations don't want us there as well but there's always some opportunity that can be taken but then we have to depend of Krishna. We should see overall- we're not just doing KC for ourselves but we're doing it for the benefit of the whole world. So we should look at every moment for those opportunities as they arise. A good example is like in England- when they first started KC, we were arrested, we were seen as beggars, we were seen as nuisance personalities. *Nowadays they have Janmashtami in the Houses of Parliament. So, this is an indication of what can be possible and this is just the begininng.* We do look forward to a time when all countries become Krishna Conscious or have KC as the common spiritual platform or religious platform so that's what we should be aiming for. Well I'm not going to be specific- we've already seen different groups that have deviated from SP's ISKCON, SP said that the biggest threat to ISKCON is not from outside, it's from inside- internal dissention. So, I don't think it's possible to stop that but the sincere core followers should just go ahead with the program that SP gave. SP did say that the ones who are genuine will flourish- those that are not genuine they'll reduce and shrink because everybody thinks that they're the ones that are genuine and the other ones are not. But the fact is that there's a structure, there's a way of doing things that SP gave which is very clear. And as long as we stick to that,

then even when there are dissenters, agitations, it won't disrupt the general growth and development of the movement. So without being specific about this particular deviation or that one, the principle is always the same- just try to stick with the structure SP gave that will carry us through. We have in the past, moments and time when the whole movement seemed like it was going to collapse- that's a fact. But somehow or another because we stuck with the principle that SP gave in his will that the ultimate managing authority is the GBC- that's carried us through those dangerous periods, maintain stability and now we see a lot of growth because we are strong in our structure and the structure that SP gave. Usually you see that the people who deviate- they do it on the basis of abandoning some aspect of the structure that SP gave. The only way that a person can really leave ISKCON is by disobeying SP's instructions. His instructions are very clear- follow the GBC structure and that will see you through so I don't think there'll be too many problems but even if there are, we stick to what SP gave us and we'll be okay.

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

Well, as we just said, our dream would be that governments accept KC, promote KC, facilitate the KC movement. SP was always trying for that, he would always be trying to meet with the government leaders, he would try to persuade them to introduce the basic social, cultural values that KC has- Varnashrams. Just like he met Indira Gandhi, he had a plan actually drawn up from points that he was gonna discuss with her and his idea was that the government should assist the KC movement in his development because then the whole country gets the benefit. So, because they had the wrong idea- secular government, this, that and other but that was SP's vision- *All countries can be turned into fully Krishna Conscious places if the leadership accepts direction and instruction from the brahmins. Brahmins means following purely. So if we want to have some influence, we have to keep that purity. Gradually gradually people will come to understand that without that purity there's no question of civilised human life and they'll want the KC movement to become prominent though.*

So I don't know that'll happen in 25 years or 250 years but I think as long as we stick to the standards that SP gave, then we'll see gradually gradually that all countries will become Krishna Conscious. That's our aim and that's our dream. Yeah, my final words of wisdom Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. That's the fountain head of wisdom. That's where all wisdom lies. We have to have that connection with Krishna. If we have that connection with Krishna, nothing can touch us.