

HH Guru Prasad Swami

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?

Of course, in general, I think everything that SP, did and said every example is 26 Vaishnav qualities, what he asked us to do one time, SP said, I just have one request that do just as I have done. So studying SP is a very important thing **cooperating** with one another is very important. One of the main one of the things I think the greatest examples of SP is how he sacrificed his most cherished activity, which was to translate just to make sure that ISKCON, you know, he had to pull himself away from the translation, even though repeatedly requesting leaders just to make sure that the movement went on was that important to him, after seeing how the mission of the Gaudiya Matha didn't stick together and the way it was conceived. So I find this to be so exemplary, that we should be able to sacrifice our own personal desires for the better good and the ongoing mission of SP. SP is always a gentleman I was just sharing a class today how SP was so humble that the devotee is repeating the verse and SP repeating it along with the devotees. Just as another devotee repeating the verse, even though he knew the verse and so I find this out, you know every example SP and of course carrying out the order of the spiritual master this was SP that's trademark and repeatedly again and again if one just sticks to the instructions of the Acharya SP are as the Acharya of everyone and will be successful and this was his mood and this was his key to success.

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 think following SP's, desire, that rise early in the morning, attend Mangala Arti, to chant 16 rounds. You know, it's not only a personal practice, to get one strength, but to give an example to others, and to inspire others by one's example. Some other things well, having, I think, having a positive attitude, and taking advantage of every experience, whether it be pleasurable, or even defeat, and, and turning it into a learning experience. I think these are things that I have, that have contributed to my growth and, and whatever success or continuing continuation, and I've been able to achieve this by these things.

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

...Well, I have a very challenging zone, I have, probably the poor zone in the whole world, and, you know, lacking leadership, but I think one of the, one of the greatest successes I ever had was when I was a Sankirtan Leader. And I think by going out and doing Sankirtan with the devotees and providing them with what they needed the support that sometimes every cook for the devotees take them out. And then at the same time, go out myself, even though I had to do all these other things. What inspired me to do that really was example I saw in Jayananda prabhu, that he would, you know, drive a taxi, finance example, cook for the devotees give the class, clean up, just did everything. And so that was another one was when I started the Panama temple. Just trying to follow SP example. I went there with a few boxes of books and no money, and I sold the books and, and then just by meeting people and teaching the devotees to do those things, you know, do it with them, cook with them go out and sankirtan with them go out and harinaam with them. And then another temple I started basically I did the same thing we did everything together was a teamwork even though I didn't even know the term teamwork at that time was just a natural way of trying to bring people up in Krishna consciousness.

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

I stated a few things here, you know, well, I think, you know, understanding by SP example, that as a leader, one has to either know every aspect and area or, you know, find people who do know and bring them in. So the devotees get a well rounded background in Krishna consciousness. And I think that was something I tried to do to the best of my ability.

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

Well, what I call the four cardinal rules given by Lord Caitanya in Sikshashtakam, *trinad api sunicena*, *taror api sahisnuna*, *amanina manadena* Kirtaniya sada Harih those things also from Updeshamrita, the six loving exchanges, this has to be constantly, they're- revealing one's mind, giving knowledge, receiving knowledge, giving prasadam, receiving, prasada, giving gifts and you know, because Bhakti means Love, and if these loving exchanges aren't there, then you know, how can we teach people to love if we don't give them the leadership skill which Rupa Goswami has given to us. Another thing, **friendship**, showing friendship to devotees even though one may be in a leadership position, always feeling compassion for devotees and people and the congregation that people were training and the people were attracting and always being enthusiastic and, and *trying to make every activity that one does inspirational and trying to find out, see how I can do this in such a way that it will be inspiring to others*. Those are some values that I think are very important also, you know, personal example, as far as skills I was thinking, *always listening being empathetic and empathetic, delegating, you know,*

empowering devotees these relationship skills that are very important. Another thing is still being a missionary spirit that this is something very important, SP taught us to be missionaries. And even as in the case of Brahmana, Lord Caitanya told him just in your neighborhood, those that live around you, you know, bring them into Krishna consciousness. Even though one may not be a big worldwide preacher but in one's neighborhood, in one's community one should even in in the workplace a devotee, if they're trained properly, just by their, their desire to, I even experienced that when I was working with while I was joining Krishna consciousness, and people would ask me, why am I happy? You know, why, why do I do this work, which was the army enthusiastically when nobody else would just want to do the absolute minimum. So I find that those are important factors.

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?

.....I think SP number one thing was book distribution, and even expanding it more and more into the electronic field as we've been doing, I think we can do that more and more. Internal cultivation. You know, forming Brahmins, teaching devotees, these are these are really core strengths that we've been able to do nicely nice Deity worship, almost everywhere I go, even a small temple, they'll have, you know, even maybe simple but nice Deity worship. These are things that SP taught us, ISKCON has been successful in doing life membership, these things prasadam distribution. We've been successful in doing these things to not maybe not to the highest degree, but to some degree, yes, definitely. And we haven't we have some we have a conception theoretical conception and we see how, as SP said that the Varnashrama's good, you know, it's naturally there in every society. But, you know, in organizing Gurukulas, restaurants, farm communities, cow protection, these are things that we, you know, we really have, we're lacking. And I guess the next question is, how do we, you know, how do we make these things happen? Well, the main thing is hearing from SP with the importance of these things. Just like I know, many devotees have become vegans, because they don't want to use commercial milk. So instead of becoming vegans, the positive step is that we are, we understand the importance of protecting cows. And we make we make that effort to do so, which of course, is easier to do in places like India, or even third world countries, it's sometimes a little easier to do, especially if they have the money to do it. Whereas in first world more developed countries, it's more of a challenge, but SP example was working properly, would

accept a new challenge every day. And we have to have that spirit of accepting the challenge to do these things, SP said in 1975, we have enough temples with big deities, not that we shouldn't have any more. But we should emphasize now preaching centers with a restaurant, Reading Room, this kind of more innovative things, things will be attractive to modern society there, especially in the Western countries, they may not be so attracted to coming into a place where there's a ceremony going on so this vision I'm sure SP had this vision back in 1975 and even earlier so these things you know we Yes, we have we have to really dig into SP instructions and take them to heart just issue the SP came, you know, with nothing, and that example has to just constantly be the you know, cultivated in our, in our consciousness and we have to do the same. As Lord Caitanya said., Bhagavatam says that, that we give our life, we give our wealth, we give our intelligence and we give our words. That's the meaning of sacrifice. Well, I think some of the things that could we could develop like, Oh, I remember one man he told me you know, you have the best food in the world why don't you have an international..., you know, these are some of the things that we kind of missed out on we could have cornered the kirtan market we could have, we did corner the incense market at one time we didn't keep it up. This is something that could have financed our home I know other yoga societies that they have their incenses in every store around the world and we had that one time so we have to be really consistent and determined to keep these things you know not that to keep a book distribution we sacrifice something that we we've already become successful and so, some of the things that we have to be very careful to preserve first of all the GBC, SP established GBC, SP emphasize the importance of protecting our properties making sure that our properties are well kept up nice and beautiful. I remember one time SP came in and pointed his cane looks like he was pointing at the fan and everybody was trying to think of some esoteric teaching and SP said, no cobweb, spider, he said spider. So you know we're just ..SP said maintain everything very nicely SP said that at least maintain what I have done, so GBC, book distribution, you now Bhakti Shastri, Deity worship all these things we have to preserve and increase and make it more wonderful , beautiful. .

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

Temples that are a strong nucleus I find in many places of course India's a little different but find many places that are temples are you know we don't have a strong attendance now so I vision having temples you know with that our congregation who supported temples that that and communities because it may not just be a temple may be a farm community that grow organically that evolve naturally, of course, we make word to start something. But there should be a plan of how to make it successful. Not that the whole full responsibility falls on a few people who become overburdened and give it up. Young couples being encouraged. This is something that SP did, and encouraging young people. I always envisioned that in the future, we should have a type of franchise program otherwise, let's say young couple, they just getting

married. Instead of having to go out and just start you know, work for somebody that we have a program where we'll set you up will give you a preaching Center, the necessary paraphernalia to maintain yourself, maintain your center so that you can dedicate yourself to preaching so having that kind of a spiritual franchise. I always envisioned that and I've tried to encourage the word is a little money to try to do that for new couples. And then they give it back you know, they, they pay back, it's like, almost like a long spiritual loan, so to speak. Well, encourage successful persons of the importance of the of the missionary activity in Krishna consciousness. Otherwise, not just train young devotees who come in as missionaries, but train everybody in the missionary spirit or the sankirtan spirit. That means somebody who has money, who has abilities and everything to offer those so that young people can grow integrally, you don't just, you know, have somebody come into a temple, they get trained, and when they want to get married on their own, but we support them all the way through them, you know, find the means to do that financially. And that everything is supported by congregation. So there's no territorial issues that know this city, there's only room for one temple, but actually everything is nicely supported. So we can have, even in a small town, we could have, you know, two or three or four temples. Impediments are not having the right mission, you know, mission statement, the right understanding of how SP did things and, you know, just sometimes try, we try to blend in so much make people feel good that, as SP said, I always remembered what he said to Dr. Mishra. He said, I didn't come to learn, I came to give, I didn't come to take, we beg people like learn it, you know, and Haridasa Thakura ,they would begg, but they will beg people to take Krishna consciousness, they wouldn't beg people to give them something, they beg them to take what we have. So when we have that spirit of giving, then I think that overcomes the obstacles of complacency, looking comfort zone, I get comfortable, I don't want to disturb my, you know, my comfort zone. One thing is very important is that that the devotees the future leaders in our Krishna conscious movement. I think we're especially addressing GBC college candidates zonal, zonal supervisor candidates, GDO candidates to make sure that the education that they're receiving filters down in the same way that they receive it. Otherwise, we don't want to have an elite. It will always be an elite. But we don't want to have an elite and then ignorant masses. And so I think this is one of the most important things and something that we have to be very careful of, **and that everyone emphasizes the importance of Sadhna even in one's home and try to tailor it so that people can get a taste for it.** Otherwise, don't try to make them proud. SP in the Third Canto, Second Canto, third chapter, I think, it's verse 22, it says that everyone should have Deity worship in their homes from four in the morning to 10 at night, which we don't even have the most temple. So point is to SP said one time let people acquired a taste for chanting and then everything else can come. So there are leaders always give people that taste as SP explains, in the beginning of Nectar of Devotion. **Rasa, or taste is what motivates people.** So we have to give them a taste for sadhana in such a way that they can perform it in their home and then they can increase it. So we have to have this mentoring system of you know, making sure that people are not they don't just become stagnant and just to go they gave a donation that's okay. We have to avoid that and everybody gets trained.