

# HH Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj

***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?***

HH: It's important that we follow SP instructions. Devotees gave their lives because they saw that he was genuine, spiritually right, and exemplary. *I feel what's important is you should realize the importance of spirituality and purity. No doubt we're running a big movement and we have to follow management principles also and be educated in management principles also, but SP showed us how to be humble. He mentioned again again- "Purity is the force"* So I'm all favor for educating our managers and devotees, but they must be educated also the importance of purity, purity in spiritual life means, chanting your rounds, following regulative principles, having good sadhana reading SP proper books is the spiritual foundation is there ,then I feel management courses will be very helpful so from SP instructions are there, his books and SP did emphasize purity is important, since we are Vaishnavas , we should also inherit from SP the mood of compassion. It was SP's desire to save humanity, he left Vrindavana at the age of 61,India. Otherwise why would SP go to a land where he knew nobody, so compassion is essential. Vaishnava is para dukha dukhi seeing others in distress he also gets distressed so to me the most important thing is SP instructions, we are fortunate that we have proper instruction in his books and the folio and we should try make , practise them and then also be humble and be kind in dealing with others.

***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.***

HH: I stated earlier SP instructions have been clearly given in his book SP wanted us to preach actively *expand book distribution* and he wanted to see Krishna consciousness spread everywhere, in some parts of the world we see the preaching is expanding in some parts of the world is not expanding as far as SP would like it to be. And the various reasons for this one thing, it's hard to list all

of them in a interview. You mentioned the Gurukula, yes SP want strict Gurukula and we started in Vrindavana with that model in 76. But over time, the teachers discovered the Indian parents were not so keen to send their children to strict Gurukula and even our devotee parents were not so keen as a result the group had to modify his approach, we still give Spiritual Education but unfortunately we also follow a Government curriculum. Now we do have one school in Mayapur as an example of a strict Gurukula but the enrollment is not all that big I believe there were 200 children there. So we need to practice and follow what SP said.

***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: Management in ISKCON is not an easy assignment. Management in any institution especially an institution like ours which has very strict rules and where one really has to surrender to make advancement. *So as leaders we have to realize that people are watching us and we have a way exemplary.* As i said earlier, for me the most important training is a leadership practice- good sadhana and for SP instructions for spiritual life. I feel that if we follow these instructions, taking Krishna's mercy which is necessary was originally advancement and for achieving even success and in any area. So I don't want to repeat but I had strong faith and SP instructions, I mean i have been GBC since 1975 and it hasn't been an easy journey, it has given me many, many challenges, in fact in 75 we had very very limited resources but by SP's mercy Krishna gave us more and more resources and if we use our facility to serve the Lord, Krishna reciprocates. I mean I speaking for myself and so what I believe is a spiritual movement and management techniques are good we should be we should create ourselves, we should encourage ourselves with these management techniques but *the most important thing is spirituality.*

***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:***

HH: Frankly i feel very embarrassed by your questions I feel embarrassed by these questions because I don't want to blow my own trumpet I just feel really Krishna is very kind, he sent us some good devotees who were also were committed to preaching about book distribution we emphasize the importance of spiritual Sadhna and these devotees taking this very seriously and we work together, SP instructions are in the center. SP emphasized book distribution to be very important so that's what we try and promote and Krishna has given us success. We've also had some problems in behaviours what more can, I say I don't think I have any special management technique i have anything, any secrets to share with all of you. I mean SP instructions are black and white and we follow that we work hard, preach, and then depend on Krishna. I mean frankly, iam involved in so many projects and so I'm involved in so many projects nearly 40 to 50 temples and Krishna has made me instrument in building temples in Canada, India, Africa but I don't really, I can't list any special technique or approach that I use that contributed to the success, my approach is all the same, it is just Krishna's and SPs mercy that gave us all the success the same and if we are not careful Krishna can take everything away also. So we not only have to worry about being successful we also have to worry about staying on the right path so that it doesn't go away. We saw the SP achieved so much success but He never took any credit for himself whenever devotees told him, SP you did so much, you do this, you did, that he said I have done nothing. I just had faith in the words of my Spiritual master and then try to execute it and he has given the success. So I had faith in whatever SP said we try to fulfill his instruction, and Krishna gave us some success but there are also problems in our temple, I won't say it's is all rosy but you try address all the problems, you may solve one problem and tommorow another problem comes, so if you're managing you have to be ready to solve the problems. You can't say that to many problems are not going to manage, this headache we have to take for SP, and if we don't try our best then who will do it? *Our love for SP would be shown by how we cooperate and how we dedicate ourselves to his important instructions. .*

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

HH: We definitely should train our ISKCON leaders in professional management techniques. Leaders should be aware of the new techniques for example, accounting, accounting is very necessary in every temple doesn't matter which part of the world you are residing, SP was very strict to the point and not a penny should be wasted. In fact, I read that the SP first came to America He will use the all of the people would send him letters, he will open the envelope. Lord Caitanya gave us a formula for spiritual success. He said, *trinad api sunicena, taror api sahisnuna, amanina manadena, kirtaniyah sada Harih* We want to chant the holy name, we should practise tolerance be more humble than a blade of grass offer respects to others, not expecting anything in return. So if we want to be good leaders, the foremost is quality is exemplary behavior. Devotees these days are very sharp, people are very well educated. I have one question that people bring up all the time. They say that when we first came to Krishna consciousness, we saw every devotee as someone is descending from Vaikuntha. but then as we advance in the moment and stay longer, we see, Oh, this devotee has so many weak points because they see that we are not being exemplary, and then they begin to reexamine their commitment. So it's important that we remain exemplary and we remain humble. And you have to be tolerant. Management is not an easy job, you have to be cool. It's not that we deal with devotees rudely, a new devotee may require extra attention just like a young baby requires extra attention. So as leaders we should be ready to be tolerant. I find that if we are sweet and gentle with people, they will reciprocate, if we harsh in our dealings then they will individually do not surrender, they do not like to be dealt with harshly. Chanakya Pandit gave us a perfect solution, he said deal with others, the way you want others to deal with you. So we keep that as a guide. That will help, also the *Bhagavad Gita* says *one of the austerities of the tongue is to speak sweetly. Speak the truth but speak it sweetly*. So this guideline it should be will be helpful and I've already spoken about morning program and sadhna There's no point repeating it.

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

HH: As i mentioned our managers should be trained in different aspects so professional management, they should know how accounting works, they should know what the labour laws in the country are, they should be taught to follow the laws of the country you can't take shortcuts, so they should definitely be trained in proffesional management. But at the same time they should be they should be educated to realize we have to be exemplary in our behavior, We have to practice what we preach, if people see a discrepancy, they won't surrender easily. So encourage leaders to be exemplary and I already mentioned humility, tolerance friendliness. These are all important aspects.

***Organizational SWOT for today's ISKCON***

***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?***

HH: Real strength is SP, we have to keep SP in the center and practise SP's instructions, we can't say, oh these instructions are not practical in today's environment. Vedic message is eternal, SP gave us a pure message, The core strength of ISKCON are pure spiritual principles that we follow, there are many spiritual organizations, they don't follow strictly rules, like we follow. Our strength is.. Our real strength is Spiritual Strength. I mean, people come and say, Oh, you're deities are so beautiful , our deities are beautiful because they dressed by

devotees who practice spirituality that's why. You can't buy Deity's beauty with money. So the important thing is spirituality and I think this has been ISKCON's main strength and as long as we emphasize these principles ISKCON will remain strong. SP wanted us to work together either we stand divided we fall, when do we get divided when we develop personal ambitions, I want to be a big leader, I want to be an influential personality but our philosophy is Be Servant of the Servant. Caitanya Mahaprabhu gave example on numerous occasions taught us the importance of humility and we genuinely practise this, that will help us. So in my opinion, those who want pure bhakti yoga come to ISKCON. and our core strength is Keeping SP in center and following his instructions as it is. Maya is getting stronger day by day and kali yuga's influence expanding very fast everywhere for example in India, it doesn't matter whether you reside in village or a big city, thanks for TV, bad news spreads very fast So, a biggest challenge is fighting Maya and we need strongly leadership with that and we need leadership is ready to face challenges that makes sacrifices. Everyone was impressed by the sacrifice that SP made to obtain the Hare Krishna Land. Leaders have be willing to take challenges and rise to the occasion. One weakness in ISKCON is we don't have enough leaders, we need more leaders and then unfortunately we don't have a solid economic base, our temples are primarily dependent on donations and as we do not have an economic, strong economic base, we're not in a position to financially maintain qualified Householders and as a result many of them have to do outside jobs, businesses etc. To develop an economic base we need devotees, with a good business sense. One positive development is that our congregation and expand everywhere and in our congregation we have a very qualified devotees. I personally believe in involving the congregation more and giving them responsibility and dealing with them very fairly, some of our leaders have fear if congregation have given responsibility then they take over movement. I think this is an illusion. I think our big weakness is we do not know how to use our congregation properly. If Congregation is a respected, given responsibility they can help the ISKCON leadership and expanding the movement, so our weakness is we don't have a strong economic base, and we don't fully trust our congregation Congregations should be treated properly and given responsibility. We have situations where in the book marathon, congregation devotees take so much time off just to do books, if they were not sincere, why would they do that ? It all depends on how we deal with congregation.

Proprietorship turns sand into gold. So as we as leaders, we should make everyone realize this is their project, this is not a project just other individual, GBC or Guru or President, it is the project belonging to the devotees for anxious to serve SP and if we deal with that mentality, I think we will get more people involved, more people on the positive side which will help ISKCON expand. Kali Yuga is advancing very fast and people are suffering more and more, so much pollution, crime tension, stress in society and this opens up a big opportunity for preaching The opportunity for preaching is the best today, people are really suffering and it made me realize they're suffering and this is a solution before it will take to it. Unfortunately many people are suffering and they don't mind suffering but they won't accept a spiritual solution we have to keep trying, there is an opportunity to preach everywhere, I travel everywhere and people everywhere are waiting to hear that pure message and at least we try we've done our job we are not the ultimate controllers so I think we need to emphasize importance of preaching. We need to use modern techniques of preaching and preaching is encouraged that will attract more people to Krishna Consciousness. In areas where the preaching is strong, results are positive. in areas preaching is weak results are not so good. So we need to train our leaders, to encourage, to understand the importance of Preaching and as we have a famous saying in ISKCON Preaching is the essence, Books other basis. That should be encouraged that will help. Reading SP books and following SP instructions will keep us united, if over time we minimize the importance of SP books about SP instructions then not only will our preaching suffer but we will break up into fractions, some of the other, our management should be such that SP is in the center and his instruction the basis of our activities ,okay. In my opinion we need to establish the GBC body as the ultimate Management Authority for ISKCON SP wanted this and in SP absence absence this has to established and emphasised. GBC members have to be exemplary in their dealings and have to be spiritually strong and fully committed to SP instructions. Sometimes some devotees say you give GBC this responsibility, what if they misuse it ? the chances of the whole body misusing it are almost non existent. The GBC body has over 30 members and decisions are made by majority vote. So it is definitely the safest path. and we should all cooperate and recognize that the GBC is ultimate managing authority. And the GBC also as i said, has to work on it's image and improve and improve and GBC has to definitely improve it's image also. If the leaders exemplary, committed to

preaching and enthusiastic I'm sure, others will follow. Just because one or two decisions may have gone wrong doesn't mean that we don't accept GBC as the Ultimate Management authority. SP wanted this and this is very very essential. The other threats are, are losing faith in proper instructions or saying that now times of advance, these instructions are not so relevant. So that should be avoided also and the threats will vary from country to country, in some countries the government is the government is becoming anti religious. In many countries, the banning distribution of any type of religious literature which includes our literature, but in Kali Yuga you can expect you can expect these type of problem, we are we ready to face the problems And working together we can find solution, SP emphasized again and again that we should cooperatively, United we stand, divided we fall, SP used to say a blade of grass by itself doesn't have strength but when it mixed with other blades of grass then it becomes more powerful so I think the important thing is unity. And one of ISKCON's major strength is by and large it is United except for one or two ambitious leaders who broke, who became independent and by and large ISKCON leadership is committed to SP instructions and they are working together in the GBC body. .

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

Caitanya Mahaprabhu had predicted the holy name will be chanted in every town and village in of the world. My dream vision is that the holy name has spread every corner of the globe and I would like to see temples in every corner of the globe. But in order to do this we need qualified individuals, temple doesn't mean just buying some expensive marble and temple doesn't mean just having a nice design using expensive Marble and beautiful Deities, real beauty of the temple is the behavior of devotees. So our devotees have to be trained up properly so that they are exemplary and when people see an exemplary behavior even if they are grossly materialistic, they say oh I met an honest individual. Lord Caitanya predicted that the Holy name will be chanted in every town and village of the world. And I think we need to do a lot of work, to realize this prediction Our Acarayas had great faith that this prediction can come true that is why Bhaktisiddhanta ji in first meeting with SP instructed him to go to the west, he



repeated it in 1936. So we need to all work together we work hard to realize this we need to preach more, train the devotees spiritually and also train them up managerially, we need good managers, trained managers, good thing is we have educated people joining our movement now and it's easier to train, those who are materially educated. The obstacles are many, one is ambitious leaders not having full faith in SP instructions and there are many, so many obstacles where we keep SP instructions, keep the mood of humility and we keep the mood of service, that's important we don't come to ISKCON to become possessors of property. We come to ISKCON in a mood that service other servants, serving all the vaishnavas and vaishnavis If we keep that mood that will help us to advance to keep the atmosphere more harmonious and encourage us to expand the movement also. I think there was a wisdom is all there in SP's instruction. and we should just equate ourselves with his instruction and follow them and have the the mood of humility and service rather than the mood of proprietorship.