

POISON ANTIDOTE

By ISKCON Devotees

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POISON ANTIDOTE

By His Holiness Danavir Goswami

Several devotees have asked me what I think of the “Poison Issue” i.e. the suspicion held by some persons that Srila Prabhupada was purposefully poisoned by his disciples. According to this theory, supposedly Srila Prabhupada’s intimate disciples were so eager to usurp his position and assume guruship themselves, that they administered arsenic to him. With the readers’ permission, I will first emphatically state my response to this question and will subsequently provide supporting observations and evidence based on sastra.

My opinion is that Srila Prabhupada was surely not poisoned by any disciples. The poison theory is hatimata...Mad Elephant Vaisnava Aparadha at its heaviest. By drinking this deadly brew, bubbling with blasphemy of Vaisnavas, naive devotees are ruining their spiritual lives. Please avoid listening to the poison theory.

The poison theory sets forth the premise that in his final days Srila Prabhupada unknowingly surrounded himself with envious disciples who were conspiring to poison him and actually did so. I consider it to be a great insult to my spiritual master and to his sincere disciples and thus I beg my readers’ indulgence in writing this paper.

A Vaiṣṇava is by nature a nonviolent, peaceful living being, and he has all the good qualities of God, but when the nondevotee blasphemes the Lord or His devotee, the Vaiṣṇava never tolerates such impudency. (Srimad Bhagavatam: Introduction)

One should be very meek and humble in his personal transactions, and if insulted a Vaiṣṇava should be tolerant and not angry. But if there is blasphemy against one’s guru or another Vaiṣṇava, one should be as angry as fire. This was exhibited by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. (Caitanya Caritamṛta; Ādi 7.50 Purport)

REAL AFFECTION

The following conversation excerpt took place in October of 1977 in Vrndavana. Śrīla Prabhupāda and twenty of his disciples are discussing the advantages and disadvantages of his fasting. The poison proponents allege that Śrīla Prabhupāda knew his disciples were poisoning him at the time of this discussion.

Early one morning in October, as Śrīla Prabhupāda continued fasting from food and drink, Upendra made an innocent but somewhat impertinent complaint. "How can you refuse to drink?" he asked.

"What is wrong if I don't drink?" Śrīla Prabhupāda replied. "I feel no inconvenience." Upendra added that if Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't drink, his body would become dehydrated. Prabhupāda made no reply, and Upendra left the room.

"What about water?" Abhirāma asked.

Śrīla Prabhupāda thought for a moment and said, "So you discuss among yourselves and decide what you want me to do."

Discuss? He seemed to be speaking of more than the merits of drinking water. "Discuss about recovery?" asked Abhirāma.

"I don't want," said Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"You say you don't want recovery, Śrīla Prabhupāda?"

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. That afternoon Prabhupāda called for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, who was at that time taking his lunch. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa responded at once and entered the room along with several other G.B.C. men. They all came very close to hear what Prabhupāda wanted to say.

"If I want to survive," he said, "of course I'll have to take something." His words came slowly, but with difficulty. "It is not possible to survive without taking any food. But my survival means so many inconveniences, one after another. Therefore I have decided to die peacefully." His voice trailed off, and everyone was too stunned to speak...After a few minutes, Prabhupāda turned his attention to Hari-śauri, who was sobbing silently near Prabhupāda's head. With some sternness in his voice, Prabhupāda asked, "Why do you want me to survive?" Hari-śauri could not speak. He felt that if he asked Prabhupāda to stay it would be an offense, since he had already decided to leave. Hari-śauri could not keep his emotions in check, and yet he did not want to say, "Stay and struggle." Neither did he nor any of the others want Prabhupāda to leave...

"If I want to die," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "this is a very peaceful death. You go on chanting." As the kīrtana continued,

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked to be excused. Prabhupāda asked why, and he replied he was going for discussion.

“For discussion,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “They want me to survive, and I want to die peacefully. I cannot make miracles. The physical body has to be maintained if I am to survive. But without taking food, how the physical body will go on? That is fanaticism.” Śrīla Prabhupāda’s eyes had been closed, but suddenly he opened them and said, “Kṛṣṇa wants me to do as I like. The choice is mine. Kṛṣṇa has given me full freedom...”

Within a few minutes all the available G.B.C. men and senior sannyāsīs were gathered in the outer room. One by one, devotees spoke up in support of the decision to ask Śrīla Prabhupāda to stay...It was about 3:30 P.M. when the twenty devotees entered Śrīla Prabhupāda’s room and crowded around his bed. Śrīla Prabhupāda lay with his eyes closed, motionless, but alert to their presence.

“Hmmm? So what do you want?” he asked.

“If Kṛṣṇa gives you the choice, then don’t go! We need you!”

“So this is your joint opinion?” asked Śrīla Prabhupāda. “You have discussed?” He held his hand in the air and moved it around, so as to indicate all the devotees.

“We have all met together, Śrīla Prabhupāda. We want you to remain and lead this movement and finish the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. We said that you must remain for at least another ten years.”

He was considering the proposal... Then with his eyes still closed, he yawned, and his gold teeth began to show. “All right, so give me something to drink,” he said, and all the devotees shouted, “Jaya, Prabhupāda! All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda!”

“This is real affection” Prabhupāda replied.

—(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lilāmṛta 54:
“At Home in Vrindavana”)

Srila Prabhupada; 1) spoke of “dying peacefully,” 2) spoke of “the choice is mine,” 3) asked his disciples present to discuss the merits of his own “recovery” with him and 4) said “give me something to drink.”

Each and every one of these expressions is senseless if addressed to one’s assassins. However they make perfect sense if they are addressed to one’s beloved, trusted spiritual sons.

The most important words in this exchange are, “this is real affection” spoken by Srila Prabhupada. He was not showy. The unbounded affection between Srila Prabhupada and his disciples was not a secret. He spoke about it regularly and expressed it constantly. The poison proponents want us to believe that all this affection is false. Srila Prabhupada

said it was “real affection” and the poison proponents say there was no real affection, only maya, false, illusion. Here is an excerpt from a letter Srila Prabhupada wrote from England just two months before his departure from this world:

Now I have come to the West in a broken condition of health. In such condition no one would think of touring. An ordinary man would prepare for death. But I am not afraid of death, so why not let me see once again all of my beloved disciples and the Temples all over the world. (Letter to: Vasudeva — Bhaktivedanta Manor 6 September, 1977 [emphasis ours])

It appears that the poison proponents cannot imagine the wonderful affection that Srila Prabhupada and his faithful followers experience and therefore these poor souls accuse the guru and his disciples of having false affection for one another.

Less than a month before his departure from this world, Srila Prabhupada feelingly addressed his surrounding disciples:

I want association of Vaiṣṇava. You are all pure Vaiṣṇavas. You have sacrificed everything, material comforts, for Kṛṣṇa's sake. That is Vaiṣṇava. Anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam. You have no other desire. You Europeans, Americans, you are born amongst material desires. And when you become free from material desires... Therefore you are all Vaiṣṇava, anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam. So you are so merciful. (Room Conversation — October 18, 1977, Vṛndāvana)

Srila Prabhupada said his disciples sacrificed everything for Kṛṣṇa's sake and the poison proponents say Srila Prabhupada's disciples assassinated their spiritual master. Someone is mistaken. Consequently we must choose whether to believe the straightforward words of Srila Prabhupada or the twisted words of the poison proponents.

SRILA PRABHUPADA'S MEDICAL CONDITION

Although poison proponents say that Srila Prabhupada was ill-intentionally poisoned, this view is not supported medically. Dr. Karl Otto Jacob, MD¹, internist (40 years of professional practice in internal medicine) gives his analysis:

“A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's [Srila Prabhupada] chronic diabetes, which was never medically properly treated, was bound to lead to other serious consequent diseases which had to increasingly manifest in his body, such as premature aging and degradation of blood vessels, microangiopathy (narrowing of arterioles and capillaries), high blood pressure, heart problems,

and diabetic nephropathy (occurs as consequent disease in most cases of untreated diabetes).

Diabetic nephropathy (severe kidney damage due to diabetes) is usually accompanied by nephrosclerosis, pyelonephritis, and again high blood pressure, tendency for heart attacks or strokes. In addition his urethra was constricted which put a constant back pressure on the kidneys, increasing the renal insufficiency and inducing further damage. Chronic renal insufficiency leads in four stages to uraemia, i.e. terminal renal insufficiency which is bound to lead to death unless treated in emergency care by dialysis.

The patient suffering from uraemia dies of the metabolic poisons that cannot be excreted anymore by the kidneys, and accumulate in the body instead. Typical symptoms of renal insufficiency leading up uraemia are: anorexia (total loss of appetite), gastrointestinal disturbances, peripheral polyneuropathy, high blood pressure and heart problems, edema, in the last stage cerebral problems up to coma. A person suffering from uraemia is literally being poisoned and feels like this, as metabolic toxins (creating, uric acid, electrolytes, and many other uraemic toxins) accumulate and intoxicate the organism in a lethal way.

It is medically utterly amazing that the patient [Srila Prabhupada] reached such a high age in spite of his diabetes going on untreated for decades, being bound to lead to serious consequent diseases. The idea that the patient was poisoned by anything else than his own metabolic toxins is superfluous and sounds highly speculative and absurd to anybody knowledgeable in medicine."

My personal experience is supported by Doctor Jacob's medical observation. Since I was present in England when Srila Prabhupada made his last visit West, I submit my brief account with the permission of the readers:

On August 27, 1977, practically without notice, His Divine Grace, arrives at the Bhaktivedanta Manor in England, looking like mere skin and bones. He is grave, the devotees who have come with him are grave and the whole mood is one of profound concern. German and French devotees rush over to be with their spiritual master. All the devotees at the Manor are visibly shaken by seeing Srila Prabhupada in that condition. His Divine Grace is placed upon a custom-built chair palanquin and carried up to his quarters. Here he is offered trays of prasadam and he invite all the devotees into his room to associ-

ate with him while he honors a little prasada. He comments how nicely things are improved.

Srila Prabhupada has some very endearing words for his GBC secretary of England, Jayatirtha, whom he depicts as a transcendental manager. His Divine Grace, weighing probably less than sixty pounds, declares he has come to England to take shelter of Jayatirtha. Jayatirtha is so gentle and expert in dealing with devotees that there are never any complaints.

The following morning Srila Prabhupada is brought downstairs on the palanquin into the temple room by strong-bodied Amita and another devotee. Offering humble pranamas, he gazes upon the deities of Sri Sri Radha-gokulananda through dark sunglasses and loving tears. It is my duty to place exactly three drops of caranamrita (and not more) into the right palm of his balloon-like swollen hands. It is painful to see the tiny ring stranded on one of his fingers.

Then he is brought near the vyasasana where guru-puja and a forty-five minute kirtana is conducted. Although Srila Prabhupada does not show much expression, sometimes during the tumultuous and ecstatic kirtana he smiles slightly giving the devotees great joy. Occasionally he moves his fingers up and down a little bit and by this movement, all of the devotees are sent jumping up and down higher and higher. To please their beloved gurudeva, the first week, the British devotees go out and distribute more books than ever in history.

On his Vyasapuja day, Srila Prabhupada comes down to the temple room a little early to celebrate with all of the devotees. His Divine Grace indicates that his traveling secretary Tamal Krsna Maharaja should speak. The senior disciple tells about Srila Prabhupada's mission beginning from his coming to the United States in 1965. As our Guru Maharaja listens silently, the early days in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles are described. Maharaja tells of the struggle in Los Angeles when there was no temple and Srila Prabhupada was holding programs in different people's homes. At this point His Divine Grace interjects some of his own words with a smile, "Even in garages." The chronological narration continues up to the present delighting everyone, including Srila Prabhupada.

The next day, on Janmastami, despite the inconvenience, Srila Prabhupada drives thirty-five miles to see that very attractive young boy, Radha-Londonisvara (this is a name for Krsna given by Srila Prabhupada which mean the controller of London.).

A few days later, turmoil prevails and it is decided that His Divine Grace must be taken to the hospital immediately. He

returns a few hours later, evidently the doctors helped his urination difficulty.

On September 13th, as unexpectedly as he came, he leaves England for Vrndavana, foregoing Gita-nagari's milk bath² due to his failing health.

At the time of Srila Prabhupada's two-and-a-half week visit to England, hundreds of his dedicated disciples from Europe were there with him. They were serving Kṛṣṇa at Srila Prabhupada's command. Their loyalty was to Srila Prabhupada exclusively and this was known to His Divine Grace. These disciples were not beholden to any other ISKCON leaders beyond Srila Prabhupada. If at any time during his visit, Srila Prabhupada would have wished to indicate that some treachery was being perpetrated against him, he would have had a small army to assist him in any way. In other words, Srila Prabhupada was not being forcibly constrained by his traveling servants. He personally asked Tamal Kṛṣṇa Goswami to speak at his Vyasapuja. Srila Prabhupada had many opportunities to communicate to large groups of us and in each occasion he made no indications that he was being poisoned, rather he showed loving trust and appreciation for his assistants.

WHO IS POISONING WHO?

The Poison Theory hatched from the same two insidious, perverted, minds which conceived of the ritvik theory. Both persons were formerly members of ISKCON, but due to philosophical deviations and illegal activities, were expelled. I personally tried to reason with one of these persons several years ago but he assured me that he would never cease his vicious attacks against ISKCON.

"It is said by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita that there are two envious living entities—the snake and the envious man. The envious man is more dangerous than a snake because a snake can be subdued by charming mantras or by some herbs, but an envious person cannot be pacified by any means." (Srimad Bhagavatam 4.22.11 Purport)

We are supposed to avoid criticizing other devotees engaged in the Lord's service. The poison proponents are however, by no means engaged in devotional service. Quite to the contrary, they are displeasing the Lord more than anyone by writing books blaspheming Vaisnavas.

"Kṛṣṇa, however, cannot tolerate any insults or blasphemy against a Vaiṣṇava." (Caitanya Caritamṛta; Antya 3.213 Purport)

"Similarly, you may do anything very nicely; but if you commit offense at the feet of a pure Vaiṣṇava, then all your

assets will be immediately vanquished. Vaiṣṇava aparādhā. Because Kṛṣṇa is very angry.” (Lecture; Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.9.8 — Calcutta, March 5, 1972)

According to the logic of ātmavan manyate jagat, everyone thinks of others according to his own position. The poison proponents accuse Srīla Prabhupada’s dear, faithful disciples of poisoning him, an act that only the poison proponents themselves could have ever conceived of. It is obvious, however, that the poison proponents’ motivations are solely bent on assailing ISKCON. Otherwise why is it that poison proponents accuse only active ISKCON devotees and do not accuse others? Several persons, now estranged from ISKCON, were also present with Srīla Prabhupada during his final days in Vrndavana. Why have these escaped the poison proponents’ scrutiny?

ISKCON’S EXALTED POSITION

ISKCON is an incarnation of the Lord³ and shows unparalleled strength and valor in spreading transcendental knowledge and devotional service throughout the world. This is due to the purity of Srīla Prabhupada and the sincerity of his true followers.

The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is also an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa in the form of the holy name (nāma-rūpe)...the entire world is in a precarious condition, and the only hope is this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. (Srimad Bhagavatam; 10.3.21 Purport by Srīla Prabhupada)

Although Kṛṣṇa cannot be killed, Vasudeva, as the father of Kṛṣṇa, was trembling because in affection he thought that Kāmsa would immediately come and kill his son. Similarly, although the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and Kṛṣṇa are not different and no asuras can check it, we are afraid that at any moment the asuras can stop this movement in any part of the world. (Srimad Bhagavatam: 10.3.22 Purport by Srīla Prabhupada)

Our International Society for Krishna Consciousness is one of the branches of the Caitanya tree. (Ādi 9.18 Purport)

It is very regrettable that complacent so-called devotees criticize the members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness for accepting sannyāsa and spreading the cult of Lord Caitanya all over the world. It is not our business to criticize anyone, but because they try to find fault with this movement, the real truth must be stated...Genuine devotees of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu must take pride in the spread of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement instead of viciously criticizing its propaganda work. (Ādi 10.160 Purport)

Because the poison proponents vindictively blaspheme ISKCON, which is an incarnation of Godhead, they must be considered offenders of the holy name and enemies of the Lord like Sisupala.⁴

ARE THE POISON PROONENTS DEVOTEES OR WHAT?

The poison theory blasphemers are so-called devotees, polluted with envy and/or madness⁵, foolishness⁶ and wickedness⁷.

“When childish people think themselves mahā-bhāgavatas and act in defiance of the Vaiṣṇava spiritual master, such behavior simply holds them back from receiving the mercy of the Vaiṣṇava guru. Bewildered by false ego, these self-proclaimed devotees gradually become fit to be ignored by pure devotees on the intermediate platform and are cheated of the mercy that comes from the devotees’ satisfaction. Thus they become asādhū by constantly committing offenses against the devotees who preach the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Pure devotees, therefore, in all circumstances display indifference to those who falsely imagine themselves to be viśuddha-bhaktas, or pure devotees of the Lord. This indifference is an excellent manifestation of their mercy.” (Sriḷa Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Prabhupada quoted in Srimad Bhagavatam: 11.2.46 Purport)

According to sastra, one who blasphemes a Vaisnava should be defeated by expert preachers or punished by virtuous ksatriyas or avoided by neophyte sadhaka-bhaktas. Many expert devotees have tried their best to talk some sense into the poison proponent blasphemers to no avail.

“Duryodhana was acting under such influence of the external nature, by which he would be vanquished at the ultimate end. He could not accept the sound advice of Vidura, but on the contrary he insulted that great soul, who was the well-wisher of his whole family. Vidura could understand this because he was a pure devotee of the Lord. In spite of being very strongly insulted by Duryodhana’s words, Vidura could see that Duryodhana, under the influence of māyā, the external energy, was making progress on the path toward his own ruination.” (Srimad Bhagavatam; 3.1.16 Purport)

Therefore the best policy for ISKCON devotees is to act on the platform of madhyama adhikaris and completely avoid the poison proponents. Devotees should follow the instruction given by Sriḷa Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati (above) and Sri Havir (below) found in the Srimad Bhagavatam 11.2.46:

*īsvare tad-adhīneṣu
bālīṣeṣu dviṣatsu ca
prema-maitrī-kṛpopekṣā
yaḥ karoti sa madhyamaḥ*

An intermediate or second-class devotee, called madhyama-adhikārī, offers his love to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is a sincere friend to all the devotees of the Lord, shows mercy to ignorant people who are innocent and disregards those who are envious of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The poison proponents desire to see ISKCON demolished along with the loving reciprocation between Srila Prabhupada and his faithful followers. Philosophically, it appears to me that the poison proponents show the disease of nirvīśa (Mayavada) and sunyavada (voidism). Both groups want to eliminate the Lord's relationships with His devotees. It is difficult for Mayavadis and voidists to accept personal relationships since they desire to be impersonal. Thus as Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in the Bhagavad-gīta, the impersonal path proves troublesome from beginning to the end.

RUKMI's RUIN

Formerly, anti-cult groups and atheists vigorously opposed the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. In the present day we find a new anti-cult class of so-called devotees dedicated to disrupting ISKCON, misrepresenting Srila Prabhupada's words and defaming respectable Vaisnavas. These new anti-ISKCON people are certainly behaving like demons. It is not a fact that just because a person uses a Sanskrit name or sometimes speaks about Kṛṣṇa, it means that he is necessarily a devotee. One who behaves antagonistically toward Kṛṣṇa's movement and/or His devotees is a kali-celā (disciple of Kali) .

A jealous person in the dress of a Vaiṣṇava is not at all happy to see the success of another Vaiṣṇava in receiving the Lord's mercy. Unfortunately, in this Age of Kali there are many mundane persons in the dress of Vaiṣṇavas, and Śrīla Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura has described them as disciples of Kali. He says, kali-celā. He indicates that there is another Vaiṣṇava, a pseudo Vaiṣṇava with tilaka on his nose and kañṭhī beads around his neck. Such a pseudo Vaiṣṇava associates with money and women and is jealous of successful Vaiṣṇavas. Although passing for a Vaiṣṇava, his only business is earning money in the dress of a Vaiṣṇava. Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura therefore says that such a pseudo Vaiṣṇava is not a Vaiṣṇava at all but a disciple of Kali-yuga. A disciple of Kali cannot become an ācārya by the decision of some high court. Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaiṣṇava ācārya. A Vaiṣṇava ācārya is

self-effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgment. A false ācārya may try to override a Vaiṣṇava by a high-court decision, but Bhaktivinoda Thākura says that he is nothing but a disciple of Kali-yuga. (Caitanya Caritamṛta; Madhya 1.220 Purport)

The modern day poison proponents remind me of Kṛṣṇa's opponent Rukmi. Five thousand years ago, Lord Kṛṣṇa kidnapped Princess Rukmini. At that time, it became clear to everyone present, including Jarasandha and the hopeful bridegroom, Sisupala, that Kṛṣṇa indeed earned the right to possess Rukmini. Only Prince Rukmi, the powerful warrior and elder brother of Rukmini, had sufficient envy and poor judgment to pursue Kṛṣṇa in battle. He called out to Kṛṣṇa;

“Stop for a minute and fight with me! O most abominable descendant of the Yadu dynasty! Stand before me for a minute so that I can teach You a good lesson. You are carrying away my sister just like a crow stealing clarified butter meant for use in a sacrifice. You are proud of Your military strength, but You cannot fight according to regulative principles. You have stolen my sister; now I shall relieve You of Your false prestige. You can keep my sister in Your possession only until I beat You to the ground for good with my arrows.” (Kṛṣṇa; Chapter 54)

After hearing all these crazy words from Rukmī, Lord Kṛṣṇa immediately shot an arrow and severed the string of Rukmī's bow, making him unable to use another arrow. Rukmī immediately took another bow and shot another five arrows at Kṛṣṇa. Being attacked for the second time, Kṛṣṇa again severed Rukmī's bowstring. Rukmī took a third bow, and Kṛṣṇa again cut its string. This time, to teach Rukmī a lesson, Kṛṣṇa shot six arrows at him and then shot another eight arrows, killing four horses with four arrows, killing the chariot driver with another arrow, and chopping off the upper portion of Rukmī's chariot, including the flag, with the remaining three arrows.

Rukmī, having run out of arrows, took assistance from swords, shields, tridents, lances and similar weapons used for fighting hand to hand, but Kṛṣṇa immediately broke them all in the same way. Being repeatedly baffled in his attempts, Rukmī took his sword and ran swiftly toward Kṛṣṇa, just as a fly proceeds toward a fire. But as soon as Rukmī reached Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa cut his weapon to pieces.⁸

Then, just when Kṛṣṇa was unsheathing His own sharp sword, in preparation for decapitating His adversary's proud head, soft-hearted Rukmini intervened on behalf of her foolish brother. Kṛṣṇa consented to spare Rukmi's life, but the Lord didn't refrain from disfiguring Rukmi's appearance.

Despite this humiliating incident, poor Rukmi didn't learn his lesson. He plotted and schemed another way to defeat the Lord. The next time he thought of cheating away the family's wealth by challenging Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, Balarama, to a chess match. Balarama agreed to play chess with Rukmi and the wagers were high. Rukmi kept cheating however and finally Balarama, who had formerly advocated forgiveness of the arrogant Rukmi on grounds of family relationship, now raised His mighty club and lowered the boom on Rukmi's head.

WHAT HAPPENS TO VAISNAVA BLASPHEMERS?

I don't know if it ever occurs to the poison proponents that their absurd speculative theory may be incorrect and that they could be committing heinous Vaisnava aparadhas. The poison proponents do not hesitate to accuse Vaisnavas who have dedicated their lives to Srila Prabhupada's service. Is this not madness⁹? By misconstruing a comment Srila Prabhupada made about the effect of some medicine he was taking and by supposedly discovering high arsenic content in some of Srila Prabhupada's hair¹⁰, the poison proponents have fabricated a fanciful murder conspiracy.

Aside from them, at least other devotees who are interested in making spiritual advancement should consider the following Vedic injunctions.

The Hari-bhakti-vilāsa cites the following quotation from the Skanda Purāṇa concerning the blaspheming of a Vaiṣṇava:

*yo hi bhāgavataṁ lokam upahāsaṁ nṛpottama
karoti tasya naśyanti artha-dharma-yaśaḥ-sutāḥ
nindāṁ kurvanti ye mūḍhā vaiṣṇavānāṁ mahātmanāṁ
patanti piṭṛbhiḥ sārḍhaṁ mahā-raurava-samjñite
hanti nindati vai dveṣṭi vaiṣṇavān nābhinandati
krudhyate yāti no harṣaṁ darśane patanāni sa*

In a conversation between Mārkaṇḍeya and Bhagīratha, it is said,

“My dear King, one who derides an exalted devotee loses the results of his pious activities, his opulence, his reputation and his sons. Vaiṣṇavas are all great souls. Whoever blasphemes them falls down to the hell known as Mahāraurava, accompanied by his forefathers. Whoever kills or blasphemes a Vaiṣṇava and whoever is envious of a Vaiṣṇava or angry with him, or whoever does not offer him obeisances or feel joy upon seeing him, certainly falls into a hellish condition.”

Also, the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (10.314) gives the following quotation from the Dvārakā-māhātmya:

*kara-patraiś ca phālyante su-tivrair yama-śāsanaḥ
nindāṁ kurvanti ye pāpā vaiṣṇavānāṁ mahātmanāṁ*

In a conversation between Prahlāda Mahārāja and Bali Mahārāja, it is said, “Those sinful people who blaspheme Vaiṣṇavas, who are all great souls, are subjected very severely to the punishment offered by Yamarāja.”

In his Bhakti-sandarbha (313), Jīva Gosvāmī quotes this statement concerning the blaspheming of Lord Viṣṇu:

*ye nindanti hṛṣīkeśam tad-bhaktam puṇya-rūpiṇam
sata-janmārjitam puṇyam teṣām naśyati niścitam
te pacyante mahā-ghore kumbhīpāke bhayānakebhakṣitāḥ
kīṭa-saṅghena yāvac candra-divākarau
śrī-viṣṇor avamānanād gurutaram śrī-vaiṣṇavollaṅghanam
tadīya-dūṣaka-janān na paśyēt puruṣādhamān
taiḥ sārḍham vañcaka-janaiḥ saha-vāsam na kārayet*

“One who criticizes Lord Viṣṇu and His devotees loses all the benefits accrued in a hundred pious births. Such a person rots in the Kumbhīpāka hell and is bitten by worms as long as the sun and moon exist. One should therefore not even see the face of a person who blasphemes Lord Viṣṇu and His devotees. Never try to associate with such persons.”

In his Bhakti-sandarbha (265), Jīva Gosvāmī further quotes from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.74.40):

*nindām bhagavataḥ śṛṇvams tat-parasya janasya vā
tato nāpaiti yaḥ so 'pi yāty adhaḥ sukṛtāc cyutaḥ*

“If one does not immediately leave upon hearing the Lord or the Lord’s devotee blasphemed, he falls down from devotional service.”

EXHUMATIONS

Eventually the poison proponents may desire to exhume Srila Prabhupada’s body for performing more forensic examinations and laboratory tests. For the time being, they are content to write books attempting to defame Vaisnavas. The poison proponents are already disfigured by Kṛṣṇa’s sharpened sword of Maya, disgraced and devoid of the ability to comprehend or preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They can simply waste their time blaspheming devotees and conjuring up tricks to defeat the Lord’s movement. We sincerely hope that they do not make the same mistake Rukmi made by trying to cheat Balarama in a gambling court.

ENDNOTES:

1. From a paper prepared by Ministry For The Protection of ISKCON by Jahnu dasa and Hari Sauri dasa.

2. Gita-nagari is an ISKCON farm community in Pennsylvania, whose herd of protected cows have become famous for delivering huge quantities of milk. The devotees at Gita-nagari have invited Srila Prabhupada to come for a visit and he

enthusiastically accepted their invitation. One devotee even suggested to Srila Prabhupada that the devotees in Gita-nagari will bathe him in the milk when he comes there.

3. Therefore Kṛṣṇa has taken birth or taken shelter within the womb of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Men of Kamsa's class, therefore, are very much afraid and are busy trying to stop this movement, especially in the Western countries...As stated by authorities, kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra: in this age, Kṛṣṇa has appeared in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading like wildfire all over the world, and it will go on doing so. Men who are like Kamsa are very much afraid of the movement's progress and acceptance by the younger generation, but as Kṛṣṇa could not be killed by Kamsa, this movement cannot be checked by men of Kamsa's class. The movement will go on increasing more and more, provided the leaders of the movement remain firmly Kṛṣṇa conscious by following the regulative principles and the primary activities of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra regularly. (SB 10.2.20 Purport by Srila Prabhupada)

The ISKCON branch, being directly watered by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, is becoming undoubtedly successful. (Caitanya Caritamṛta; Ādi 12.73 Purport)

4. One should not mistakenly think that Lord Kṛṣṇa must be worshiped by an inimical attitude like that of Śiśupāla. The injunction is ānukūlyasya grahaṇam prātikūlyasya varjanam: one should give up unfavorable activities and accept only favorable conditions in devotional service. Generally, if one blasphemes the Supreme Personality of Godhead he is punished. As the Lord says in Bhagavad-gītā (16.19):

*tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krūrān
saṁsāreṣu narādhamān
kṣipāmy ajasram aśubhān
āsurīṣv eva yoniṣu*

There are many such injunctions. One should not try to worship Kṛṣṇa unfavorably; otherwise he must be punished, at least for one life, to be purified. As one should not try to be killed by embracing an enemy, a tiger or a snake, one should not blaspheme the Supreme Personality of Godhead and become His enemy in order to be put into hellish life...Anything done by those who have taken the attitude of enemies will be baffled (moghāśāh). If these enemies try to be liberated or to merge into the existence of Brahman, if they desire to be elevated to the higher planetary systems as karmīs, or even if they desire to return home, back to Godhead, they will certainly be baffled.

The conclusion is that one should not give up pure devotional service. For one's own benefit, one should not imitate Hiranyakaśipu or Śiśupāla. This is not the way to achieve success. (Śrīmad Bhagavatam 7.1.26 Purport)

5. Offending or blaspheming a Vaiṣṇava has been described as the greatest offense, and it has been compared to a mad elephant. (Caitanya caritamṛta; Antya 3.213 Purport)

6. "Therefore it is said vipra-śāpa-vimūdhānām. Vimūdhānām. Those who areascal, fools, they will want to try to insult real brāhmaṇa, Vaiṣṇava. Then they are finished. Of course, a Vaiṣṇava never curses. Tolerates. Tṛṇād api sunīcena taror... Vaiṣṇava tolerates, but Viṣṇu never tolerates." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.15.22-23 — Los Angeles, December 2, 1973)

7. "To blaspheme a Vaiṣṇava, a preacher of God's glories, is a great offense. Kṛṣṇa, God, is never tolerant of offenses committed at the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava." (Science of Self Realization; Sainly Compassion)

8. *Kṛṣṇa Book 54: Kṛṣṇa Defeats All the Princes and Takes Rukmiṇī Home to Dvārakā.*

9. *“Recently I have received one letter from Rayarama which he has signed his name to as ‘‘Raymond’’. That means he has drifted from our society completely and his letter is very discouraging. He has accused everyone save himself. So I do not know what can be done with him. In the Bhagavad-gīta we understand from the 16th Chapter that when a living entity becomes envious of Krishna, he is put into the darkest region of material existence, exactly in the same way as when a citizen is disobedient, lawbreaker, he is put into the prison cells. So this is nature’s way beginning from Krishna, and one has to undergo such stringent regulative principles of material nature in such disobedient position. So I have not replied that letter; I have got it in the file.” (Letter to: Brahmananda — London 25 November, 1969)*

10. A brief note about arsenic. The Calcutta area in particular and West Bengal in general is notorious for having arsenic in the water. I recently spoke with an Indian lady who is a reputed water scientist for that area of Bengal. She told me that the problem is so bad that they have restricted drinking the water there lately. So if Srila Prabhupada’s hair showed too much arsenic, it may have been due to his having been born and raised there.

2

NARRATOR OF POISON CD DECLARES HOAX

By Jagannatha Dasa “Puripada”

CHAKRA (USA) - August 18, 1999: I was on the “inside” of the poison paranoia via Rochana and company since almost day one. I co-wrote, narrated and produced the now infamous poison CD, talked extensively with all the pro-poison big guns and subsequently carefully went through the poorly written book by Nityananda Prabhu and I can tell you it is all false propaganda spun out to try and feed the personal agendas of the principals. In short, his devotees or anyone else did NOT poison Srila Prabhupada and no one knows it better than the self-serving spin doctors behind this most unforgivable and evil lie.

On several occasions Rochana bragged to me about his contacts with a former producer of the Johnny Carson Show who was going to network with him to sell the story to Hollywood as a documentary for big money.

Nityananda, on the other hand, is a confirmed junior varsity Vaishnava who curses his luck at not having risen high enough or fast enough to actually yield any real influence in ISKCON.

The purity of these men’s quest is not in discovering the truth about anything, but rather, using this self-created hot potato to try and push themselves forward as the leaders they were never meant, and are certainly not qualified to be.

As for me, I would like to publicly apologize to any of my god brothers and sisters whose minds and hearts were hurt by this fraud and declare that as a person at ground zero of this cruel hoax it is as empty and heartless as the black hearts who knowingly invented it.

After undergoing the experience of working with devotee mobsters Rochana Dasa and Nityananda Prabhu I quite rightfully took a few months to reflect on the events I experienced while drawn into their web of lies, innuendo and half truth which is the hallmark of the professional agitator.

At first their passionate presentation of the “facts” seemed both credible and alluring and thus, I offered my services to help champion their seemingly laudable cause.

Slowly, however, the actual agenda of these two began to seep out which led to my ejection of one of their pathetic minions from our SRI center in Buffalo. And now, after much careful consideration I feel the time is right to FULLY expose the deliberate, pre-meditated fraud these men were out to sell to our worldwide family of already fairly traumatized devotees.

When preparing the “Poison CD”, I was asked point blank by Nityananda Prabhu to falsify the taped “evidence” by editing it in such a way that it might seem both more damaging and credible to ISKCON’s rank and file. A few words seamlessly shuffled about here and there and suddenly, one dangling scrap of audio becomes a very different animal. For those not familiar with digital audio editing the fact is you can make a person say ANYTHING going so far as moving syllables and even breathes to make an edit go your way. That is why, by the way, audio tape is almost always not admissible in a court of law. Far too unreliable.

Finally, I want the world to know that this entire campaign of terror was designed to help bring about the fall of our divine Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya and establish the counterfeit philosophy of a few twisted men dedicated to the assumption of power at any cost. It is that terrible eventuality which has prompted me to finally speak out. Therefore I humbly request that this entire poison issue be seen as the Trojan Horse it is and that it’s architects be finally and forever exposed.

In Krishna Seva,
Sriman Jagannatha Dasa Adhikari
SRI / The Spiritual Realization Institute Sri Puri
Dhama Vaishnava Community Lockport, New York

3

POISON CD RESPONSE

[Editor's note: Although the narrator of the Poison CD, [Jagannatha dasa (Geoffrey Guiliano) aka. Srila Puripada], has recently publicly deplored the whole episode of the Poison CD (above) still we feel it worthwhile to present major excerpts from the Poison CD Response by the Ministry For The Protection of ISKCON compiled by Jahnu dasa and Hari Sauri dasa)

A REPLY TO THE POISON CD/TAPE

The Poison CD: Narrator: Geoffrey Guiliano aka. Srila Puripada Producers: Rocana dasa, Dhanesvara dasa, Nityananda dasa

Over the last few months, a rumor has surfaced which has it that Srila Prabhupada supposedly was poisoned by some of his closest and most trusted disciples. Just recently a CD (henceforward called the Poison CD or PCD when quoted) and equivalent tape have been put out which, although hiding behind the banner of neutrality and claiming no other intention than getting to the truth of the matter, strongly and in not so subtle terms suggest that Srila Prabhupada was in fact poisoned by his Western disciples and that there is a conspiracy being perpetrated by the GBC to cover this up. The following will show that this proposal is without any basis. The so-called evidence that is being presented on the Poison CD is, upon closer examination, actually found to be very loosely constructed and rather insidious at its core.

First we will present a few logical arguments against the idea that Srila Prabhupada was being poisoned by his disciples: In his last days Srila Prabhupada was very keen that he be taken on a parikrama around Vrindavana. He made several statements to the effect that, "I'm just lying here idle and rotting; I want to spend my last days going out on parikrama." It is clear from the conversations that he was frustrated about the prospect of passing away in his bed. But the Kaviraja assured him that it was not guaranteed that he was about to pass away. He said that if Srila Prabhupada would just take his medicine and rest peacefully without talking he would be able to gain strength, and then he could be taken on a parikrama. The Kaviraja stated very emphatically that if Srila Prabhupada went riding on a bullock cart in his present condition, as Srila Prabhupada wanted, he would not survive for even a few hours, what to speak of the whole trip.

The Kaviraja was clear that such a tour would without a doubt kill Srila Prabhupada.

Leading devotees also were devastated by the idea of Srila Prabhupada rattling about in a bullock cart and pleaded with him not to go. They said that he should wait until he had gained more strength and then they would take him in a suitable van. We should understand that at that time Srila Prabhupada had not taken any solid foods for several months and his body was mere skin and bones.

At one point Srila Prabhupada said, "Let's make an experiment. Let us go on parikrama and we shall see whether I will live or die. Whether I lie here in bed or on a bullock cart, what does it matter?" But the devotees who were nursing him all the time were given hope by the Kaviraja that he could get better, and therefore they would not let him go. They pleaded with Srila Prabhupada not to go. Now, if the Kaviraja assured the devotees that Srila Prabhupada would indeed not survive a bullock cart ride, and if these devotees wanted Srila Prabhupada dead, what could be more convenient than letting him go on a parikrama and in this way speed up his death by entirely natural causes, rather than risk discovery in a poison plot?

It was only after so much pleading from the devotees, and the assurance of the Kaviraja that it was possible to improve his condition if he would just take the time to let the medicine work, that Srila Prabhupada declined. After hearing the sincere plea of Tamal Krishna Maharaja, Prabhupada responded in a very loving manner:

Prabhupada: All right.

Bhakti-caru: Jaya Srila Prabhupada.

Bhavananda: Thank you, Srila Prabhupada.

Prabhupada: I cannot refuse all your request.

Tamala Krishna: And we cannot refuse your request. We will take you all over tirtha-yatra, to all the places. Just that you get a little stronger. You'll be free of all management. You simply go to tirthas and take darshana of all the Deities in India. Everyone will stay in their respective places. They'll manage. But we just want you to be stronger.

Prabhupada: All right. That will satisfy you? (laughter)

Tamala Krishna: Babaji Maharaja also, you also thought that? We did not talk to him.

Bhavananda: We were just on our way down the stairs to come and see Your Divine Grace.

Prabhupada: Bhavananda?

Bhavananda: Yes, Srila Prabhupada.

Prabhupada: You are satisfied?

Bhavananda: Now I am, Srila Prabhupada, yes. (Laughter) I was in too much anxiety.

Prabhupada: No, no, I cannot put you in anxiety. You have done so much. You have suffered in Mayapura so much. I cannot put you in anxiety. So I shall do what you like. (Bengali) Left-hand, right-hand. I cannot refuse....

Prabhupada: Where is Kaviraja?

Tamala Krishna: He's out again, getting medicine. This man, Srila Prabhupada, Adri-dharana says he sits up all night worried about you, thinking, taxing his mind how to give you just what you require.

Prabhupada: No.

Bhakti-caru: Yesterday, when I went to call him at 4:30, I saw him sitting on his bed.

Tamala Krishna: All night. He goes in the jungle four, five hours looking for roots, herbs to give you. He's so sincere.

Prabhupada: So many well-wishers, I cannot refuse. This is not my business. (Bengali) All right. You take Babaji Maharaja. That will be my going. (laughter)

Krishna dasa Babaji: Jaya.

Tamala Krishna: Yes, the bullock cart will go tomorrow.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Tamala Krishna: To Govardhana.

Prabhupada: Yes, other devotees can go. I cannot go.

Tamala Krishna: No, they'll go on your behalf, but you will go one day. That we promise you.

Prabhupada: All right.

Tamala Krishna: Our greatest pleasure will be to take you on tirtha-yatra, Srila Prabhupada. We wanted so much to go with you on that.

Prabhupada: Thank you very much.

Tamala Krishna: Actually, Srila Prabhupada, we're so much attached to you that you practically drive us to madness sometimes. Tonight we were becoming mad.

Prabhupada: No, no, I shall not do that. Babaji Maharaja? (Bengali) So you will take bath in Radha-kunda on my behalf.

Tamala Krishna: We'll get you better, Srila Prabhupada, and you will also be able to take bath personally there. We'll see you get better.

Prabhupada: That's all right.

From the above is clear that real love and affection existed between Srila Prabhupada and his disciples and that he accepted their genuine concern for his well-being to the point of canceling his cherished idea of performing parikrama. A further point to consider is who exactly would want to kill Srila Prabhupada and what would be their motive?

Some proponents of the "Ritvik" idea of guruship have postulated that some members of the GBC who were named by Srila Prabhupada in his letter of July 9, 1977 wanted him removed from the scene as quickly as possible so that they could become full gurus in their own right rather than be proxies for Srila Prabhupada. According to their logic, Srila Prabhupada

was about to state that he didn't want his disciples to be full gurus, and to prevent this and thus fulfill their own ambitions, they poisoned him to death. Obviously such a task couldn't be the work of just one devotee.

There would have to have been a conspiracy. An astute observer would have to ask how is it possible to keep a conspiracy like that tight without any leaks for 20 years, especially in ISKCON? And if there was a conspiracy, how was it possible to keep Bhakti Caru Swami out of it? He would have had to be in on it. But what would be his motive? He was not one of the originally appointed gurus nor did he become one until after the guru reforms in 1987.

According to the rumor mongers, there was whispering going on, about poisoning Srila Prabhupada, while many devotees were present in his room.

This clearly suggests that many devotees must have been involved, including many who had nothing to gain from Srila Prabhupada's early demise. What would be their motive in supporting such a conspiracy? This is not being explained on the poison CD. In fact nothing is being explained on this CD. We are simply left with a strong suggestion that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned but with no clear explanations or facts to back it up.

Now let us examine the claims on the Poison CD:

MEDICAL EVIDENCE

On the Poison CD it is claimed that it has not been possible to obtain clear medical records of Srila Prabhupada's physical condition prior to his departure in mid November. PCD:Quote: "It has been very difficult to get accurate and complete information about the particulars of Srila Prabhupada's health. As far as we can determine no diary was specifically kept which chronicled Srila Prabhupada's medication or the various doctors who visited Srila Prabhupada and their diagnoses."

As we shall now see, these claims are not based on facts. The authors also claim that a statement by Abhirama Prabhu regarding Srila Prabhupada's health is taken from memory. PCD:Quote: "As far as a diagnosis, Abhirama has given the following details from memory of the diagnosis made while Srila Prabhupada was at Peace Memorial Hospital in England on September 8th, 1977."

We now give you the statement from Abhirama prabhu since his words ought to bear much weight in this matter, as he was Srila Prabhupada's personal nurse up to the last month before his departure. Note how he kept a diary which often documented Srila Prabhupada's physical condition:

"As you may know, I acted as Srila Prabhupada's nurse and assistant secretary from 25th July through 16th October of 1977, and was therefore in the best position to evaluate the factors influencing his health during this time. I kept a diary which often documented his physical condition, food intakes, and discomforts. I also was the primary player when he was taken to hospital in Watford England during his last stay at the Manor. I

convinced his divine grace to go to hospital, accompanied him there, negotiated with the surgeon not to give general anesthetics and intravenous feeding (as was the policy), provided most of the post operative care to Srila Prabhupada etc. I give this background to emphasize not only my intimate role in his physical care, but also to let you know that this same surgeon, Dr. McIrving, made a very clear and definitive diagnosis of Srila Prabhupada's condition:

He had, due to diabetes (and dropsy), suffered swelling which affected the flow in his urinary tract over many years.

Since birth he had a slightly constricted urethra which further reduced the urinary flow. (This was the reason for surgery, which gave a great deal of relief to Srila Prabhupada.)

1) The combination of these two major factors had put a constant and harmful back pressure on his kidneys, which along with a general deterioration due to age had inflicted serious renal damage. (Srila Prabhupada complained to me that he had difficulty urinating and finally was blocked completely, leading to this surgery.)

2) The kidney failure would naturally cause an increase in uric acid in his system, which would probably affect digestion and appetite, both being prominent symptoms in Srila Prabhupada's condition.

3) The loss of digestion and appetite led to malnutrition, which caused an already aged and intensely taxed system to go into a total collapse.

The above is, I believe, an accurate account of the diagnosis of the doctors who examined Srila Prabhupada at Peace Memorial Hospital on 8th September of 1977, and all of my/our observations prior and subsequent to this generally confirmed this diagnosis."

As far as ascertaining Srila Prabhupada's medical condition goes, here is a comment by Dr. Karl Otto Jacob, M.D., internist (40 years of professional practice in internal medicine):

"Srila Prabhupada's chronic diabetes, which was never medically properly treated, was bound to lead to other serious consequent diseases which had to increasingly manifest in his body, such as premature aging and degradation of blood vessels, microangiopathy (narrowing of arterioles and capillaries), high blood pressure, heart problems, and diabetic nephropathy (occurs as consequent disease in most cases of untreated diabetes).

Diabetic nephropathy (severe kidney damage due to diabetes) is usually accompanied by nephrosclerosis, pyelonephritis, and again high blood pressure, tendency for heart attacks or strokes. In addition his urethra was constricted which put a constant back pressure on the kidneys, increasing the renal insufficiency and inducing further damage. Chronic

renal insufficiency leads in four stages to uraemia, i.e. terminal renal insufficiency which is bound to lead to death unless treated in emergency care by dialysis.

The patient suffering from uraemia dies of the metabolic poisons that cannot be excreted anymore by the kidneys, and accumulate in the body instead. Typical symptoms of renal insufficiency leading up uraemia are: anorexia (total loss of appetite), gastrointestinal disturbances, peripheral polyneuropathy, high blood pressure and heart problems, edema, in the last stage cerebral problems up to coma. A person suffering from uraemia is literally being poisoned and feels like this, as metabolic toxins (creating, uric acid, electrolytes, and many other uraemic toxins) accumulate and intoxicate the organism in a lethal way.

It is medically utterly amazing that Srila Prabhupada reached such a high age in spite of his diabetes going on untreated for decades, being bound to lead to serious consequent diseases. The idea that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned by anything else than his own metabolic toxins is superfluous and sounds highly speculative and absurd to anybody knowledgeable in medicine.”

*(CD Response Compilers' note: This stands as a reasonable explanation for Srila Prabhupada's statement from the room conversation dated November 8, 1977: **Tamala Krsna:** Srila Prabhupada? You said before that you..., that it is said that you were poisoned? **Prabhupada:** No. These kind of symptoms are seen when a man is poisoned. He said like that; not that I am poisoned. We shall look in more detail at this conversation further down.)*

Abhirama's statement continued:

Srila Prabhupada's esoteric conditions were carefully observed by a variety of care givers and medical professionals.

All diagnoses generally confirmed that his body was in an overall crisis, precipitated by his diabetes, dropsy, kidney damage, and overly stressed due to age, travel, etc.

- 1) His prognosis was not optimistic and death seemed imminent, at least from September 1977.
- 2) There were no indications of any other cause of his ill health i.e., (poisoning) noticed by me or any medical professional up to October 16, 1977 and Srila Prabhupada did not say any thing to indicate that he suspected such a thing during my time with him.
- 3) His eventual physical departure within one month of my departure as his nurse was a logical and expected conclusion to the above-mentioned indications. I was not at all surprised, although I will remain broken-hearted over his departure throughout my life. Srila Prabhupada had Chronic Renal Fail-

ure which caused poisoning and swelling in his body. The Chronic Renal Failure was caused by his diabetes.”

The authors of the Poison CD would have it that Srila Prabhupada showed strong symptoms of someone being poisoned, but while they suggestively attribute this to sinister origins, we shall now present some more medical facts to show that such symptoms were indeed to be expected in someone of Srila Prabhupada's physical condition, as also confirmed above by Dr. Karl Otto Jacob.

Medicine (Scientific American):

“One of the major functions that the kidney is to maintain a constant extracellular environment by regulating the excretion of fluid and electrolytes. The efficiency with which the kidney must work can be illustrated by the following example. A normal adult man has a glomerular filtration rate of approximately 180L/day (125 ml/min) and a plasma water Na⁺ concentration of 150 mEq/L. Thus, the daily filtered sodium load is approximately 27,000 mEq. The normal daily sodium intake in the United States ranges from 80 to 250 mEq. As a result, maintenance of Na⁺ balance requires that the kidney reabsorb virtually all of the filtered Na⁺ and excrete less than one percent. Furthermore, a change in sodium intake of 50 mEq/day requires a parallel alteration in fractional Na⁺ excretion of less than 0.2 percent to maintain the steady state.

Although normal day-to-day renal function is associated with very small fractional changes in Na⁺ and water excretion, the range of excretion that can be attained by a normal kidney is very large. For example, a person with normal renal function can vary daily urine volume from as little as 500 ml to as much as 15 L. An appreciation of the wide range of normal excretory function is important in understanding the pathogenesis of fluid and electrolyte disorders that represent excess conditions: edema, in which there is an increase in body Na⁺; hyponatremia, in which there is a relative excess of water; hyperkalemia, in which there is an excess of body K⁺; and metabolic alkalosis, in which there is an excess of HCO₃ [see Subsection II].

None of these conditions can be induced in persons with normal renal function (in the absence of a large, acute load) because such individuals will rapidly excrete the excess solute or water in the urine. Therefore, in almost all patients, there must be an underlying abnormality in renal excretory function for one of these disorders to occur.”

In his last months, Srila Prabhupada would often drink juices, milk, etc. and pass urine with the amount around 100 — 300 ml a day. This is less than what is mentioned as the minimum for a person with normal renal function. Srila Prabhupada was also suffering from edema as confirmed in these conversations:

Morning Walk, Bombay, December 24, 1975:

Dr. Patel: You have taken that tablet for passing more urine?

Prabhupada: Yes.

Dr. Patel: Daily or..., yes or no.

Prabhupada: I am passing (laughing).

Dr. Patel: Yes, sir, but you have got the edema on the leg, and I mean, when...

Prabhupada: It is cured. That one tablet, two tablets, has cured. So explain what is the experiment with truth.

Room Conversation, Vrindavana, October 3, 1977:

Tamala Krsna: Yes. He recommends that. Anything for the swelling, did he say, Srila Prabhupada?

Tamala Krsna: That's hot, too hot though, Srila Prabhupada? You want us to give you powders again for taking the swelling? Hands and...?

Tamala Krsna: The swelling has increased since yesterday. It was never so much as today. The mucus was never so much as today. (Bengali; Prabhupada speaks little Bengali) What did Prabhupada just say?

Room Conversation, Vrindavana, October 10, 1977:

Doctor: Ad lib. As much as he likes. Because fluid intake is very necessary, whether it is water or fruit juice or in any way he likes. And regarding the treatment of the swelling, we can approach, we can approach it scientifically only after the urine report. If there is nothing wrong with that, then some diet can be increased.

Doctor: I want Prabhupada to do nothing for edema. Edema will disappear as he gains again strength. When he gains strength this swelling will disappear gradually. It should be noted that Srila Prabhupada's liquid intake and output was very little compared to what the kidney was filtering every day. "A normal adult man has a glomerular filtration rate of approximately 180L/day (125 ml/min)." This means that the main function of the kidney is to constantly filter liquids that are staying in the body—not only to filter the incoming liquids. If the kidney is not functioning properly, naturally a lot of poison will accumulate in the body.

Medicine (Scientific American):

"The natural history of renal disease is characterized by the predictable and inexorable loss of renal function. Once a kidney begins to fail, most patients whose glomerular filtration rate (GFR) falls below 25 ml/min will eventually require dialysis or renal transplantation, regardless of the etiology of renal disease. Renal function is lost at a fairly constant rate in each patient, but the rates can vary considerably among patients with the same underlying disease. 1.2 In some patients, the disease responsible for the initial renal injury remains active. Often, however, renal function deteriorates despite spontaneous resolution or therapeutic control of the

initial disease and treatment of known risk factors for disease progression.”

Medicine (Scientific American):

“Chronic renal failure is a state of progressive and irreversible deterioration of renal function that results from a wide spectrum of diseases [see Table 1]. Although there is frequently evidence of the primary disease process, the underlying etiology often cannot be discerned in patients with advanced renal failure. The clinical manifestations of chronic renal failure are largely independent of the initial insult that damaged the kidneys and instead reflect the general inability of the kidney to excrete nitrogenous wastes, regulate fluid and electrolyte balance, and secrete hormones.

However, patients with chronic renal failure may become hyperkalemic when this system is stressed by an acute endogenous potassium load (e.g., from rhabdomyolysis or hemolysis) or by an exogenous load (e.g., from the increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, the administration of potassium salts, or the use of certain drugs). Chronic renal failure is a state of progressive and irreversible deterioration of renal function that results from a wide spectrum of diseases [see Table 1].”

Note that in table 1 it is said that diabetes is one of the major causes of chronic renal failure.

Medicine (Scientific American):

“Any patient with chronic renal failure whose dietary intake of potassium, particularly from fruits and vegetables, exceeds the rate of excretion may become dangerously hyperkalemic. In addition, severe acidosis, acute infection with a marked catabolic response, rhabdomyolysis, acute hemolysis, marked hyperglycemia, or any superimposed complication leading to oliguria may result in rapid development of life-threatening hyperkalemia in patients with chronic renal insufficiency.”

All the doctors at that time seemed to be of the same opinion that the kidneys were the problem:

Room Conversation, Vrindavana, October 20, 1977:

Tamala Krsna: No, but all along, all of the doctors say it is a kidney trouble. All of the doctors, allopathic and kaviraja agree kidneys are defective. And the surgeon in London, he also said so. Even when the urine was normal, still they said the kidneys were not in order. Just because the urine is yellow doesn't mean kidneys are functioning properly. That is not the only sign. They all agree that the kidneys are not properly functioning.

Tamala Krsna: ...Because the kavirajas don't care for x-rays. They say that simply by pulse they can see everything. Just like this man, he took the pulse and immediately he reached for the kidneys. We did not tell him anything, but he took the pulse and immediately he reached for the kid-

neys and the stomach. And he said, “Kidneys are completely malfunctioning, and the fire of digestion is nearly extinguished.” I think that’s a very practical statement if you think about it. Prabhupada, he’s passing urine, he can pass stool, but what is the real problem, the biggest problem? There’s no taste, no appetite. And that you have to admit.

Medicine (Scientific American):

“Anemia has long been recognized as a complication of chronic renal failure and, indeed, may be the cause of many of the symptoms associated with the uremic syndrome, such as fatigue, weakness, and reduced tolerance for exercise.”

On the Poison CD there is a lot speculation going on regarding Srila Prabhupada’s physical state during the weeks prior to his demise. At one point they even bluntly hint that he was being given arsenic. Quoting an Ayurvedic doctor it states: “If arsenic was used as Dr. Metha suggests, at least some of the symptoms of chronic arsenic poisoning should match Srila Prabhupada’s symptoms. This results in the gradual onset of skin, blood and neural manifestations and less dramatic gastrointestinal symptoms initially patients report weakness, anorexia and nausea with prolonged ingestion, there may be increased salivation, inflammation of the mouth, running nose, vomiting, diarrhea and weight loss. It should be noted that Srila Prabhupada exhibited many of these symptoms, specifically anorexia and unexplained loss of appetite over an extensive period of time beginning as early as Srila Prabhupada’s visit to New York in July 1976. The other symptoms of weakness, occasional vomiting, occasional diarrhea and of course weight loss were also ongoing. Other symptoms are also present but we are presently unable to obtain testimony from anyone.”

We should note here that first the authors list some symptoms of arsenic poisoning, then they go on to say that Srila Prabhupada exhibited many of these symptoms. But surely it would be reasonable to expect that if someone is being given arsenic, he’d exhibit all the symptoms of arsenic poisoning and not just some of them. Yet some prominent symptoms of arsenic poisoning like inflammation of the mouth, running nose, vomiting, and increased salivation were in fact, according to eye witnesses, not visible in Srila Prabhupada’s body at any stage. Couple this with the fact that the other symptoms exhibited by him, as we have already shown at great length, were rather to be expected from a person in Srila Prabhupada’s medical condition of renal failure, and we see the observations about possible arsenic poisoning are extremely weak and specious. It is simply unacceptable from a medical point of view to diagnose a disease and attribute its causes to a particular outside agent simply on the basis of a few visible symptoms, especially when the same symptoms can easily be

attributed to other more likely natural causes. The ethics of such a practice would surely have to be questioned.

The CD authors then claim that, “Other symptoms are also present but we are presently unable to obtain testimony from anyone.” Isn’t this a peculiar statement? If other symptoms of Srila Prabhupada’s being poisoned were also present, except that it has not been possible to confirm it with anyone, how can the authors know that these other symptoms were also present? They neither explain what these other symptoms were, nor do they have any evidence of them. Yet still they claim that they were present in Srila Prabhupada.

We should note also how it is being proposed that Srila Prabhupada’s loss of appetite was “unexplained.” This is again an attempt to suggest something sinister and lead the reader to a certain conclusion. However, as we have seen, it was clearly explained in the Scientific American as well as by Dr. Karl Otto Jacob that, “Typical symptoms of renal insufficiency leading to uraemia are: anorexia (total loss of appetite), gastrointestinal disturbances, peripheral polyneuropathy, high blood pressure and heart problems, edema, in the last stage cerebral problems up to coma.”

Thus loss of appetite is obviously one of the typical symptoms of someone in Srila Prabhupada’s condition. How then is it “unexplained?” The Poison CD contains further medical idiosyncrasies. PCD: “The final step in following the evidence is to determine if Srila Prabhupada displayed the symptoms of poisoning. Dr. Metha, an Ayurvedic physician, was shown numerous photos of Srila Prabhupada in his last days. He also observed the video documentary entitled The Final Lesson. Dr. Metha has been a practicing Ayurvedic physician since 1948. He comments:

The expression of the face and the sign of symptoms I can read from his face, his eyes, and from the language he was speaking, it was all according to my knowledge ... in the medicine because I was in the medical practice too. That is the thing that it is my presumption that he was poisoned. The second thing is that he himself told that he was given poison. So both things, the signs of symptoms and what he talked before dying, both confirm that thing. The speech, the expression which we can see from the face, and that tells that he was poisoned. The way he was talking. The poison was most probably arsenic or mercury. Because this is a slow poison, it takes time. Little amount of dose every day gradually man goes to death. Especially arsenic is such a poison, it gradually takes a man to death. This is very hard for the average person to understand.

Only the experienced eye can tell that there is something wrong, not a general death or natural death. Dullness of face and dullness of eyes and the aura which we can see from the body, tells us that there is something wrong.”

Something wrong indeed. We are here led to believe by one obscure doctor, who merely looked at some pictures of Srila Prabhupada and listened to one video tape, that Srila Prabhupada was being given arsenic. Yet, as will become apparent from the conversations of November 9 & 10 discussed herein later on, Damodar Prasad Shastri, the highly experienced doctor who was physically with him right up to the last moment, did not detect any symptoms of arsenic in Srila Prabhupada's body, and never mentioned the possibility of it at all, even though Srila Prabhupada himself discussed the possibility of his being poisoned directly with him on. Nor did Prabhupada's nurses, Abhirama prabhu and Bhakti Caru Swami, nor any of the other doctors who saw Srila Prabhupada. This diagnosis of Dr. Mehta is indeed odd.

We have to question the objectivity of the makers of the Poison CD when they repeatedly claim that it has not been possible to obtain testimony from anyone about Srila Prabhupada's health in his last days. PCD: "Other symptoms are also present but we are presently unable to obtain testimony from anyone."

And again: "It has been very difficult to get accurate and complete information about the particulars of Srila Prabhupada's health. As far as we can determine, no diary was specifically kept which chronicled Srila Prabhupada's medication or the various doctors who visited Srila Prabhupada and their diagnoses."

The authors state this even though a great deal of testimony is available from those who were actually there with Srila Prabhupada in his last days. Instead of listening to these first-hand sources, they seem to prefer a little-known Kaviraja, show him a video of Srila Prabhupada and some pictures, and from such evidence conclude that Srila Prabhupada was being poisoned. Does this flimsy methodology really fit in with this statement of purpose? PCD: "The producers of this audio document have therefore sought to present the facts as they are known as of January 1998 to the interested public. Indeed it should be made clear that this investigation has been undertaken with the strong hope that under intense scrutiny this might turn out to be nothing more than a dreadful misunderstanding."

Now, since the producers of the Poison CD prefer to rely on "remote diagnosis" rather than first hand testimonies, to help bring things into a proper perspective, we present here an eye witness account from Bhakti Caru Swami in order to give a more reliable understanding to the concerned reader:

"During Srila Prabhupada's last days he mentioned about poison soon after Makaradhvaj was given to him. That was about three weeks before his disappearance pastimes. At that time, I felt that the effect of that medicine may have been detrimental to his condition and therefore he spoke in that way. The next time he spoke about poison was a few days before his dis-

appearance. At that time according to the instruction of the Kaviraj from Calcutta, I was just giving Srila Prabhupada milk diluted with water and sweetened with sugar candy. The Ayurvedic doctor was gradually increasing the quantity of milk. He informed us that the milk intake would cure Srila Prabhupada.

Personally I did not notice any unusual bodily symptoms in Srila Prabhupada. He used to lie on the bed all the time. Sometimes he used to express some discomfort from lying on his back all the time. Therefore, he used to ask us to turn him on his side. At that time his body had become so delicate that we had to help him to turn to his side very carefully. If we were not extremely careful then he would feel pain. Two or three days before his disappearance, His Divine Grace mentioned a pain in his left thigh and he also mentioned about poison again.

The day he left his body sometime during late morning or early afternoon it seemed that the pain in his left thigh became so acute that he started to writhe. By that time he had stopped speaking. The last time he spoke was the night before, at about 12 o'clock, and he told the Ayurvedic doctor from Calcutta about some discomfort he was feeling.

When Prabhupada started writhing in pain, making some faint moaning sound, Bhavananda Maharaja, who was sitting on the bed next to him held him tightly and from that time onwards Srila Prabhupada became very still and practically did not move at all. From time to time he only opened his mouth and I poured some Yamuna water, which he drank with great relish. Although his body became totally still, yet his tongue was constantly vibrating. Srila Krsnadasa Babaji Maharaja, a god-brother of His Divine Grace, pointed out that Srila Prabhupada was chanting the holy name incessantly. Besides these his body did not display any unusual symptoms. Although His Divine Grace spoke about poison, I could not take it seriously for two reasons:

- 1) The Ayurvedic doctor was present, and as Prabhupada displayed quite a lot of confidence in him, I felt if Srila Prabhupada was really poisoned then this doctor would have detected it.
- 2) I was under the impression that when someone is given poison then his body becomes blue. However, at that time Srila Prabhupada's body became very shiny, almost golden, and he did not display any sign of pain or unusual discomfort. Apart

from his usual unhealthy condition, Srila Prabhupada was quite normal. All the time he used to quietly lie on the bed very calm and composed. Sometimes he used to give advice to the senior leaders about how to manage the society; form different trusts and what to do with the funds. His consciousness was so clear that it was obvious that he was transcendently situated. Even though he was only a few days away from leaving his body, his voice was very strong and resonant. Therefore, those of us who were present around him at that time were convinced that he was a completely spiritual personality and he was just displaying his disappearance pastime.

One day, after checking his pulse, the Ayurvedic doctor, Damodar Prasad Shastri, told Prabhupada that he was completely surprised while treating him. At one moment his pulse was so weak that it seemed as if he was about to leave his body, and the next moment it was strong and healthy as that of a young man. He also told Prabhupada that he was only displaying his pastimes. From another point of view, we also saw that he was having difficulties with his kidneys. As a result of that, his legs and the back of his palms were swelling up. When the medicine started to work the swelling went down. He obviously had some kidney problems and the doctors gave medicines accordingly.

I also want to mention something that I consider was a mistake on our part, yet we could not really do anything about it. One night when I was attending Srila Prabhupada in Hrsikesa, he told me that the time had come for him to leave his body and he wanted us to make arrangements to take him to Vrindavana. I ran downstairs and woke up Tamal Krsna Maharaja and told him what Srila Prabhupada had said. When Tamal Krsna Maharaja came to His Divine Grace he repeated the same words to him. The next morning we left for Delhi, and the following morning we took His Divine Grace to Vrindavana. That morning, after he settled down in his quarters, he called me and told me not to cook for him anymore, or force him to eat anything. I felt that His Divine Grace was preparing to leave his body like Pariksit Maharaja, without eating and drinking anything. By that time the news had spread all over the world and many leaders came to Vrindavana. When they requested him, with tears in their eyes, to continue to stay, His Divine Grace agreed. Once again I started to cook for him and he started to eat. One

day he asked me to fetch an Ayurvedic doctor called Vanamali Kaviraja from Gopinath Bazaar. As a result of the treatment by that doctor, Srila Prabhupada's condition started to improve. However, when his health improved, His Divine Grace wanted to go to the West to preach. When Vanamali Kaviraja got to know about Srila Prabhupada's plans, he requested me not to let him go. He told me that his medicine was working and Srila Prabhupada's condition was improving.

However, he said that Srila Prabhupada's condition had not become completely healthy yet. He was planning to give Srila Prabhupada Makaradhvaj, during winter, which would rejuvenate him completely. He mentioned that Srila Prabhupada's condition was not strong enough to absorb Makaradhvaj because it was a very strong medicine. Therefore he planned to give it to him in winter. Because by that time Srila Prabhupada's health would become strong enough to absorb it, and also the cold weather would help.

I was just a new devotee at the time and when I saw that Srila Prabhupada was so determined to go to the West I could not really make a strong enough endeavor to stop him from going. Srila Prabhupada's plan was to go to Hawaii after visiting London, New York, Gita Nagari, and Los Angeles. However, when in London his condition deteriorated so much that he had to come back after about a week-long stay. Vanamali Kaviraja resumed his treatment but Srila Prabhupada's condition had deteriorated so much that his medicine did not work and he stopped the treatment.

Vanamali Kaviraja did not want to give Makaradhvaj when Srila Prabhupada's health was so much better before he went to the West. However, it was administered to him only about three weeks before his disappearance when his condition was much worse than that time. Also, it was administered by a doctor from Delhi who never even saw him.

Soon after that Srila Prabhupada started to speak about poison. Therefore it seemed to me that he was speaking about the adverse effect of Makaradhvaj. After Srila Prabhupada's disappearance I often used to lament internally why didn't I stop him from going to the West? Why I didn't I tell the GBC members and senior devotees present in Vrindavana at that time what Vanamali Kaviraja told me? Why didn't I stop them from giving Srila Prabhupada Makaradhvaj that was brought from Delhi and given by a doctor who did not even see him? Now I cannot do anything about it besides lamenting about my uselessness."



After this touching report from Maharaja we move on to some quotes from Hari Sauri's book A Transcendental Diary to show that the diseased condition of Srila Prabhupada's body wasn't anything new but was an on-going thing. This further discredits the idea of the Poison CD authors, that there is a shortage of information on Srila Prabhupada's health prior to his demise, or that it was only in his last days that he displayed symptoms of serious illness.

References to swelling of Srila Prabhupada's legs and hands:

Transcendental Diary Volume 1:

December 20, 1975: Prabhupada is not feeling well; swelling in his legs, feet, and hands trouble him. To see his body puffed with fluid is very disturbing. During his massage I pressed gently on Prabhupada's foot with my thumb to show him the swelling. It left an indentation for several minutes. Prabhupada said this is due to uremia, a toxic condition caused by waste products in the blood normally eliminated in the urine. It makes it very difficult for him to climb the steps to his apartment when returning from the temple. Yet, he tolerates the inconvenience without complaint and dismissed the sight of the dent with a smile and a shake of his head.

Transcendental Diary Volume 2:

May 4, 1976: Prabhupada rang his bell at 1:00 A.M. I jumped out of my sleeping bag next door and went in, followed by Pusta Krsna Swami. Looking strained, Prabhupada informed us that he was ill and would not take his usual walk or give the morning Srimad-Bhagavatam class. He is again having trouble with uremia, using the bathroom every hour. His feet are badly swollen and he is suffering dizzy spells.

May 8, 1976: Srila Prabhupada is now feeling a little better. For the last couple of days he has been taking half-tablets of diuretic medicine, and the swelling in his hands and feet has disappeared. As soon as he got the desired effect he stopped taking the pills.

Transcendental Diary Volume 3:

New Vrindavana, June 23, 1976: Ekadasi. Prabhupada said very little on his walk and the class was short. He is experiencing disturbing heart palpitations and his uremia has caused his legs and feet to swell again. It was a strain for him to even be out.

New York, July 15, 1976: *In the middle of the night Prabhupada rang the bell. When I entered his room he was sitting behind his low desk, with his dictaphone before him, but he was not using it. He was ashen, and told me he was experiencing severe kidney pain and could not translate. It was the same problem he had a few days ago. This time he agreed when I asked if we could call a doctor on our return to New York. He wasn't confident that it would do any good, but he said that there was undoubtedly something wrong, so he had no objection.*

July 16, 1976: *Dr. Bhagat examined Srila Prabhupada, diagnosing very high blood pressure and a weak heart. He said the uremia problem, which makes Prabhupada's hands and feet swell, meant that his body produces too much water, and was probably the result of a kidney stone. He prescribed five different kinds of medicines: Lasix, a diuretic to eliminate excess water to be taken once a day with breakfast, Kerflex, an antibiotic for the kidney infection, to be ingested four times a day, Parafon Forte, a pain reliever, Valium, a psychotropic relaxant, and a sleeping pill. He also advised Prabhupada not to take any salt or sugar. Prabhupada allowed us to purchase the medicines, but I have strong doubts that he will take them. And I know that he will never agree to a diet of no salt. He always insists that there must be some taste to his prasadam, otherwise he won't eat it.*

Transcendental Diary Volume 4:

Iran, August 8: *Spent a quiet day following his usual routine, while Atreya Rsi and Dayananda prabhus went off to work in the afternoon. Despite the high altitude causing swelling in Srila Prabhupada's legs and hands again from his uremia, he has decided to stay in Iran until the 13th of the month because the climate here is very nice sunny and hot, around ninety degrees.*

Bombay, August 14, 1976: *Dr. Patel, Srila Prabhupada's Bombay walking partner, showed up in the early morning with his raucous laugh and lively demeanor, bare feet and cane, to go out onto Juhu beach with Prabhupada. However, because of the persistent swelling in Prabhupada's legs caused by his malfunctioning kidneys he wasn't feeling up to it, but he happily spent the next half hour preaching.*



We asked Hari-sauri prabhu, who, apart from being with Srila Prabhupada continuously from November 1975 until March 1977, was also with His Divine Grace for almost three weeks in late May and early June 1977, and the whole month of October in Vrindavana, about Prabhupada's attitude towards his disease and curing it:

“During the whole period I was with Srila Prabhupada I never once heard him mention that he had diabetes, nor did I notice that he ever made any specific changes in his diet in response to that condition. Nor did I ever hear the cooks that traveled with us at various times (Harikesa Swami, Nandarani dasi, Jamuna dasi, Palika dasi, Arundhati dasi, Sruti Rupa dasi) mention that they were preparing any kind of specific diet for him to counter that condition.

As far as medicines go, he also never took anything for the treatment of diabetes. When I was with him he took some Ayurvedic medicines, none of which were for diabetes — Yogendra Rasa, which I understood was a kind of brain tonic, every morning until the fall of 1976, when he stopped it completely; Triphala Churna on occasion for constipation; and Bhaskar Lavan (black salt), which he took occasionally for digestion.

These medicines, which were self-prescribed, he was sometimes advised to take allopathic, homeopathic and Ayurvedic medicines by a variety of doctors when he became ill, but again, he almost never took their advice nor their medicines. He stated his personal policy on medical treatment to Dr. Patel in Bombay on August 15, 1976 and I have included that in Volume 4 of A Transcendental Diary:

Dr. Patel arrived, having curtailed his usual walk on the beach early, when he didn't see Srila Prabhupada by the sea. He quickly inquired from Srila Prabhupada about his health and whether he was taking any medicine.

Prabhupada accepted his concern, but in his usual self-effacing manner, shook his head and quoted Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.1.4, saying that the real medicine is the chanting of the holy name. ‘Nivritta-tarshair upagiyamanad. This chanting is properly done by a person who has fully satisfied his material desires, satiated, no more. Bhavaushadhi, and it is the medicine for this bhava-roga. Bhava, punar bhava. Once take your birth, then die, then punar bhava. So this is bhava-roga. So except pashughni [animal killer] nobody can be aloof from this chanting of Hare Krsna mantra. It is bhavaushadhi.’ Dr. Patel laughed. ‘Shall we call that Pandit Ayur-Vedacarya of India for you? If you don't believe in our medicine?’ Srila Prabhupada

also laughed. 'No, no.' 'What I mean to say', Dr. Patel continued, 'is that ksetra [body] and ksetrajna [its owner] are dependent on each other; if there is no ksetra, there will be no ksetrajna to stay. So you have got to look after that ksetra, or what the ksetrajna will be happy there to live there? I think I am not wrong.'

Prabhupada chuckled. No, you are right. Ksetra is changeable, ksetrajna is permanent.

Although Dr. Patel knew very well His Divine Grace's opinion on taking medicine, he still tried some friendly persuasion and this led into a short discussion about Indian medicines. Dr. Patel said that there is a research plant in Calcutta that is extracting penicillin from cow dung.

Prabhupada knew about it, adding that Dr. Monmohan Ghosh, a pathologist of Dr. Jagadisha Candra Bose, conducted the original research proving the antiseptic properties of gobar. Dr. Patel said there were many medicinal properties in cow urine also. "Go mutra, sir, there are so many hormones coming, and a big sample of hormones which can be resynthesized as human hormones."

Prabhupada agreed, saying that if drunk, it was a good medicine for liver disease. Dr. Patel expressed his concern again for Srila Prabhupada's own health. Taking permission to raise his question he asked, 'Now then, Arjuna was so advised that he should fight out. So in that case, I mean we all consider he was right to follow Krsna's advice? Then if a man is overtaken by disease and if he fights out that . . .

Prabhupada smiled at his persistence. 'No, no, I don't say that he should not fight. It is my personal choice. Not that one should not take care of the body or one should not eat medicine, that is not . . . I like this, Let me do without medicine. That is my personal . . . What is medicine? Dr. Patel asked. 'Any herb is a medicine. Even food is a medicine.'

'Whatever it may be, Prabhupada said. 'I don't decry medicine. That is not my business. No, no, I don't say decry.'

'But you don't want to take advantage of medicine,' Dr. Patel insisted.

"Medicine," Prabhupada said objectively. "Just like a type of vairagya, sometimes they do not eat. That does not mean eating is forbidden. It is not. It is my personal, I am trying to avoid, that's all. You have heard the name W. C. Bannerji? He was a big barrister. He was one of the three inaugurators of Congress in the beginning. So he had his friend, contemporary, he was a brahmana. He was taking daily his bath in the Ganges, and if he was diseased, was drinking Ganges water. So he be-

came seriously sick. So this W.C. Bannerji, he was a big man. So he asked his permission to bring some doctor. "You'll die in this way." So he persisted, "No, I shall simply drink this Ganges water." So it is not that medical science is in defeated position."

From all the above statements we can thus understand that Srila Prabhupada made a conscious decision not to take any precaution against his diabetic condition. This inevitably leads to the conditions described above by Abhirama Prabhu and in the Scientific American. If Srila Prabhupada showed symptoms of being poisoned this is perfectly explainable in natural terms according to the known medical conditions of his body. Talk of arsenic poisoning is at best spurious and, even without the "intense scrutiny" mentioned by the authors of the Poison CD but with a little commonsense and an unmotivated examination of the available facts any unbiased person can understand that Srila Prabhupada's body did in fact succumb to natural causes.

MISSING TAPES

On the Poison CD a case is being made out of the fact that there are seventy-five days during the period July-October, for which there are no tapes recorded. PCD: "As mentioned, it is very difficult to get the specifics of Srila Prabhupada's condition. Aside from individual devotees' notes and recollections, information publicly available about Srila Prabhupada's health can only be found in conversations recorded in his room. When we went to look for this critical information, however, we found that there were seventy-five days between July and October, out of ninety-two, for which there are no tapes recorded, including forty-five consecutive days from August 18th through October 1st. That Srila Prabhupada would have spoken less during severe illness is certainly understandable. That Prabhupada would have said nothing for such long periods of time is inconceivable. We must, therefore, ask why there were no recordings made during that time. Or, if indeed recordings were made, what happened to them?"

When we examine Conversations With Srila Prabhupada, we find that from the period between July 19 until October 2, twenty-five days are missing, and then there is a gap of forty-five days from August 17 until October 2 during which no recordings are available.

Tamala Krishna Goswami explains:

"We kept a small Sony tape recorder by Prabhupada's bedside and turned it on whenever possible to record whatever he said. Often two or three days or more would pass before an entire tape was filled. The tape would simply be given one of these dates, though in fact what was recorded often represented many days of conversation. This would explain why there appeared to be so many "missing" dates.

Furthermore, on the 26th of August, Srila Prabhupada left Vrindavana for London. While in London he underwent an operation due to a worsening condition and became almost entirely bedridden thereafter, seeing practically no one. Although his intention was to travel on to America, he instead returned to India, fearing the worst. Arriving in Bombay on the 14th of September, he entered into a crisis situation. My diary entry for the 15th of September indicates the situation: "Throughout the day Srila Prabhupada has been lying in bed. He does not speak at all and hardly moves. When I asked Prabhupada how he was feeling, His Divine Grace simply said: "Crisis." On October 1st, Prabhupada left for Vrindavana. Obviously, this period represented days and even weeks when no recording was made.

Now regarding how the recordings were transferred to Los Angeles. They would be sent conveniently with some responsible devotee returning to America. As an example, Isa dasa claims that one batch were brought back by HH Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami who turned them over to Isa for sending to the archives. Hari Sauri Prabhu writes that his own experience is that sometimes the tapes were mislaid after reaching the archives. At least that was his experience with recordings he made in Hawaii in 1976; he states that Krsna Kanti, who was in charge of the archives at that time, must have mislaid them.

If we look at the above dates, it would seem most likely that I would have personally carried whatever tapes I had at the time in Vrindavana with us to London, with the idea of giving them to a responsible person to take to Los Angeles. Although I cannot recall the system of recording Prabhupada in London (I don't have the same type of remembrance of the Sony tape recorder by Prabhupada's side as I do in Vrindavana), I cannot imagine that we did not record him there at least some of the time. And yet you state that there are no available tapes at all within that period of his London visit. I find it hard to believe that there were no recordings because there were some very sweet meetings between Prabhupada and his disciples there. The question, therefore, is what happened to these tapes. Again, I wish to emphasize that I am only surmising that there must have been some conversations recorded; I cannot state certainly, but it seems reasonable. In any case, if there were such tapes, there would be no point in me bringing them back to Vrindavana. Rather I would have sent them along with whatever I had brought with me from Vrindavana with a responsible person to Los Angeles. Unfortunately, I cannot recall who that person might be. Nor can we be certain what happened to the tapes, if there were any and if they arrived in Los Angeles, once they

entered the hands of those in charge of the archives at the time. It is entirely possible that they may have suffered the same fate as those recorded by Hari Sauri Prabhu in Hawaii.”

SRILA PRABHUPADA TALKS ABOUT BEING POISONED

A number of devotees, although not inclined to believe that a conspiracy along the lines suggested by the Ritviks is true, are nevertheless disturbed by the fact that Srila Prabhupada himself appears to talk about his being poisoned. The following are the transcriptions from the Room Conversations in Vrindavana from November 8 to 10, 1977, where Srila Prabhupada talks about being poisoned. The Hindi conversations have been translated from the tapes held by the Bhaktivedanta Archives.

The translation we bring here appears in italics, and was done by Jan Brzezinski for the authors of the Poison CD. Another translation has been done by Bhakti-caru Maharaja. The translations differ slightly and in one place, which we indicate, they differ significantly. Note that on the Poison CD the authors offer only a fragment of the original conversations in Hindi together with their interpretation of the entire conversation.

Some of the quotes that appear there are even taken out of context, so to gain an actual understanding of what was taking place we present here the literal wordings of the conversations.

Room Conversations, Vrindavan, November 8,1977

(Conversation Book No.36) Page 354:

Prabhupada: *Someone says that I've been poisoned. It's possible.*

Balaram Misra(?): *Hmm?*

Kaviraja: *What is he saying?*

Prabhupada: *Someone says that someone has given poison.*

Kaviraja: *To whom?*

Prabhupada: *To me.*

Kaviraja: *Who said?*

Prabhupada: *All these friends.*

Bhakti-caru: *Who said, Srila Prabhupada?*

Prabhupada: *They all say.*

Tamala Krsna: *Krishnadas? Who said that, Srila Prabhupada?*

Prabhupada: *I don't know, but it is said.*

Kaviraja: *Oh, Maharaj, today, how did you say this - that someone told you that someone has poisoned you? Did you feel something?*

Prabhupada: *No, not said, but when one is given poison it happens like this. It's written in book.*

Kaviraj: If you take raw mercury, it can happen, or several other raw things. But who would do such a thing to you? For a saintly person like you, even if someone thinks such a thing, then he is a demon.

Page 359:

Tamala Krsna: Srila Prabhupada? You said before that you..., that it is said that you were poisoned?

Prabhupada: No. These kind of symptoms are seen when a man is poisoned. He said like that, not that I am poisoned. (Here Srila Prabhupada implies that someone else, not he himself said it.)

Tamala Krsna: Did anyone tell you that, or you just know it from before?

Prabhupada: I read something.

Tamala Krsna: Ah, I see. That's why actually we cannot allow anyone else to cook for you.

Srila Prabhupada: That is good.

Tamala Krsna: Jayapataka Maharaja was telling that one acharya, Sankaracharya, of the Sankaracharya line - this was a while ago - he was poisoned to death. Since that time, none of the acharyas or the gurus of the Sankaracharya line will ever take any food cooked except by their own men.

Srila Prabhupada: My Guru Maharaja also.

Tamala Krsna: Oh, you, of course, have been so merciful that sometimes you would take prasada cooked by so many different people.

Srila Prabhupada: That should be stopped (pause)

Page 367:

Bhavananda: Prabhupada was complaining of mental distress this morning also.

Bhakti-caru: Srila Prabhupada!

Srila Prabhupada: Hm?

Bhakti-caru: Srila Prabhupada, what was that about mental distress?

Srila Prabhupada: Hm, hm

Kaviraja: Say it. Say it

Prabhupada: (Hindi - mentions the word, poison) That same thing I said, that someone has poisoned me.

Bhakti-caru: He was thinking that someone...

Kaviraja: It is possible some demon has given it. It is not impossible. Just like Sankaracharya was poisoned over six months with powdered glass etc. But the poisoner, after twelve months

got leprosy — one has to suffer one's karma. But whatever medicine I've given will counteract either the effect of bad planets or poison on the body. Now we cannot catch who may have poisoned. And if his kidneys are bad from disease, curse, or poison, my medicine will counteract.

Devotee: Someone gave him poison here.

Tamala Krsna: Prabhupada was thinking that someone had poisoned him.

Adri-dharana: Yes.

Tamala Krsna: That was the mental distress.

Kaviraja: If he says that — there must be some truth to it. There's no doubt.

Adri-dharana: Yes.

Kaviraja: (Hindi)

Tamala Krsna: What did Kaviraja just say?

Bhakti-caru: He said that when Srila Prabhupada was saying that, there must be some truth behind it. (People all speaking at once)

Tamala Krsna: Srila Prabhupada, Sastriji says that there must be some truth to it if you say that. So who is it that has poisoned? (pause)

Kaviraja: The strongest poison is mercury. Did you read about Swarup Goha in Calcutta. The husband poisoned the wife, gave a dose of raskapoor. There is no medicine for it.

Bhakti-caru: Mercury was in the makaradhvaja?

Kaviraja: No, no. Not that mercury. Another form of mercury.

Bhakti-caru: Accha. [I see,]

Bhavananda: What did he say?

Bhakti-caru: He said that it's quite possible that mercury, it's a kind of poison...

Tamala Krsna: That makaradhvaja

Kaviraja: Raskapoor. Amirasa It is very poison. Makaradhvaja is like nectar, although not suitable for him. But That (raskapoor) is poison for everybody.

[CD Response Editor's note: Here Brzezinski's reading is different from Bhakti Caru Swami's. Maharaja renders the Kaviraja's statement like this: "Kaviraja: Makaradhvaja to amrta hota hai. Inke liye abhi suitable hota, ye bata puchate. O to sabake liye poison hota — "Makaradhvaja is nectar (life-giving). It's just suitable for him, if you ask me. It's really poison for everybody else." Where Maharaja's hears "Inke liye abhi suitable hota, ye...", Brzezinski reports something like "Inke liye bish hota hai," meaning that "in Prabhupada's case, it is like a poison." (The recording of this part of the conversation is not included on the Poison CD.)]

Bhakti-caru: He was referring to a big murder case in Calcutta. The husband poisoned the wife.

Bhavananda: Oh, yes. Our lawyer is the...

Tamal Krsna: Bhagatji doesn't think the...

Bhakti-caru: When the Lord protects, just like Prahlada Maharaja...

Kaviraja: Swamiji, (quotes Sanskrit verse)...

Tamala Krsna: No poison is strong enough to stop the harinam, Srila Prabhupada. (End)

The makers of the Poison CD have the following statement from Brzezinski:

After exchanging greetings, Srila Prabhupada surprises Misra by saying, (Bengali) "He said maybe it is true. . . . and the Kaviraja also asks, "What is he (??)saying," and Prabhupada repeats the same thing in Hindi. "Poison has been given." The Kaviraja asks, "To whom?" and Srila Prabhupada answers, "To me." And then the question comes, "Who says this?" And Srila Prabhupada answers, "They say friends." So the use of the word "friends" in English is interesting because that would indicate that he is referring to his English-speaking western devotees, that someone amongst them has said this. So we do not know who that is because Srila Prabhupada never specifically mentioned their name. So then Bhakti Charu asks in Bengali who said this. Srila Prabhupada answers in kind of a defeated tone [as if to say, you know, well] repeating the same thing, he said, "Who said this? Who said it?" And, well, it could either mean that "everyone is saying it" or "I do not know who said it" or "it's a very ambiguous statement." Tamal Krsna comes in and asks if he is referring to Krsnadasa Babaji because Krsnadasa Babaji had been there earlier that day and had been talking with Srila Prabhupada so Tamala Krsna thinks that it was him. And then the whole section finishes with the Kaviraja saying that "Who would give you poison" and "Why would anyone do that?" And Tamala Krsna of course comes in and asks in English again, "Who said that, Srila Prabhupada?" and Srila Prabhupada says "I do not know but it is said."

One thing we may note from the above is that Brzezinski interprets Prabhupada's statement about friends to indicate his western devotees simply on the basis that the word was spoken in English. However, anyone with even a scant knowledge of conversational Hindi in India knows that it is very common for a speaker to drop in English words in mid-sentence without it having any special meaning or indication. It is pure speculation on Brzezinski's part to jump to this conclusion. The makers of the Poison

CD have stated that Srila Prabhupada was reluctant to speak about being poisoned with his western disciples. They thus imply that this throws a suspicious light upon them—that Prabhupada himself suspected them. PCD: “The issue was raised only one other time and the conversation is entirely in English. Several questions naturally come to mind after hearing these conversations. First we note that Srila Prabhupada did not raise this issue with his disciples but first with an outsider whom Srila Prabhupada had probably not seen for many years as evidence that the fact that Balarama Misra asks Srila Prabhupada if he recognizes him. We must wonder why he did not take up the issue with one closest to him. Questioned by Tamala Krsna Goswami about this, Srila Prabhupada says, “he said like that”, meaning the Kaviraja: “Not that I am poisoned.” By this statement to his disciples, he denies that he is being poisoned, yet Prabhupada discusses this with the Kaviraja the very next day, and again speaks to him in Hindi stating very frankly, quote “Someone has poisoned me.” The fact that Srila Prabhupada spoke openly to the Kaviraja about being poisoned and not to the devotees again leaves us to wonder. We see that Srila Prabhupada obviously did not care to speak with his disciples on the matter, as Tamala Krsna’s last question about his statement is met with a long thirteen seconds of silence. Prabhupada obviously could have named his suspects at that time, but he declined.”

Here the makers of the Poison CD clearly jump to conclusions. First of all, from the above conversations it cannot be concluded that Srila Prabhupada did not want to speak to his disciples about being poisoned. He discussed as much with them as he did with the Kaviraja. And even if he had not, there could be many other reasons for that, one being that Srila Prabhupada simply didn’t want to upset his disciples more than necessary, as they were already going through the traumatic experience of seeing him lying helplessly in bed. Secondly, the suggestion that because he spoke frankly in Hindi about it the next day to the Kaviraja and “not to the devotees,” is therefore indicative of distrust on Srila Prabhupada’s part towards his disciples, is also specious since Bhakti Caru Maharaja, who spoke English, Bengali and Hindi, was also there. And it was Bhakti Caru Maharaja who was responsible for giving Srila Prabhupada whatever liquids or other foodstuffs he was taking. Thirdly, it is not obvious that Srila Prabhupada “could have named his suspects at that time but declined.”

There is no indication from Srila Prabhupada whether he actually suspected any specific individual or individuals or whether he was simply concerned because others had told him there was a possibility. And the fact that he agreed with Tamala Krsna Goswami that only his own disciples should cook for him indicates that he did not suspect his immediate entourage of any such crime.

These translations and transcripts do in any case reveal a confusing scenario. Srila Prabhupada indicates first to Tamala Krsna Goswami that

he had the symptoms of someone poisoned, not that he was being poisoned.

Later he states more positively that he thinks he is being poisoned. While we may never know exactly what was in Srila Prabhupada's mind, or how seriously he took the suggestion that someone may be poisoning him, what we do learn from these transcriptions is that the possibility of his being poisoned is discussed with his disciples present, both from a medical standpoint with the talk of mercury, and from the idea that an outside person could be deliberately doing it. No conclusion, however, appears to have been reached. From this we can only say that Srila Prabhupada did not seem to think that his intimate servants, who were the only ones in a position to do such a thing undetected, were doing anything of the kind.

Further, if one considers the intense loving exchanges that went on in the last three or four days, with Srila Prabhupada expressing his appreciation for the concern of his secretaries that he not go out on parikrama by calling them his "left hand and right hand" etc., one would have to conclude that he did not feel in any way threatened by them. On the contrary, it is perfectly clear even to someone who was not present to witness it firsthand, that he was reciprocating in a loving way with them to a degree not seen practically at any time in ISKCON's history.

WILL-O-THE-WHISPERS

It has been alleged that a number of "whispers" have been found on tapes of conversations which contain the word "poison" in various phrases. This "evidence" has been taken so seriously that at least three different parties have sent the tapes to forensic labs for professional analysis.

Modern techniques of spectrographic sound analysis as well as standard enhancement of the "whispers" by sophisticated audio playback equipment have been employed to ascertain whether there is any truth to this idea.

To any neutral devotee it is nothing less than inconceivable that a person or persons serving Srila Prabhupada in such an intimate manner as existed in the last days in Vrindavana could, as the theory goes, whisper "the poison is going down [giggle], the poison is going down," as they watch Srila Prabhupada gulp down a deadly potion. As we shall see from the following evidences, their credulity and faith need not be stretched for there exists no evidence to support such a notion.

The GBC appointed an independent investigator, Sriman Balavanta Dasa, to oversee a professional forensic analysis of the tapes to ascertain if there is any truth to these claims. These results are still pending but after preliminary tests and feedback from the labs, Balavanta Prabhu has expressed doubt that any definite evidence proving the claims will be found to exist. Apart from this, several GBC men have conducted tests themselves using sophisticated equipment and the results are indeed inter-

esting. According to their analyses, the word “poison” simply does not appear.

oooooooooooooooooooo

Now let’s take a look at the actual conversations, in the background of which, the “poison whispers” supposedly were to have occurred.

BBT Tape 46 side A

Conversations With Srila Prabhupada (beginning on page 373) Room Conversation: November 10, 1977, Vrndavana:

Bhavananda: We should begin the parikrama in Vrndavana.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Bhavananda: Because quite honestly, Srila Prabhupada, I think most of us are very worried. If you go off down the road and send us all back to our different assignments, we would not be able to serve with our full attention, knowing that our beloved father and spiritual guide was in such weak condition. So if we begin in Vrndavana, we’re all here now, we can see so that we know what arrangements to make for the future when you want to leave.

Srila Prabhupada: Hm. You make me flat. (break) (Supposed Whisper #1: Poison’s (?) going down. (Giggle) Poison’s (?) going down.)

Jayapataka: We heard that Your Divine Grace had a dream that a kaviraja of the Ramanuja-sampradaya would treat you and bring you back to strength, and this kaviraja says that in a very short time, following the treatment, you would regain your strength. Although he hasn’t got all of the medicines yet, but within a day or two they’ll all be prepared, and he says within fifteen days you should be quite improved in strength. So far, he seems to have been quite sincere.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no, he’s sincere. I’ll drink milk. Whatever strength is obtainable, there will be.

Jayapataka: Like to follow the same treatment, only while traveling. (Supposed Whisper #2: Let’s put poison in the milk. (?))

Hamsadutta: So we should meet and make a program for going around Vrndavana.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Hamsadutta: You want to begin tomorrow morning?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Page 374:

Tamala Krsna: You sound like you are very determined to go, Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada: Day time we expose in the sunshine, and (Supposed Whisper #3: Poison's (?) going down..) camp underneath a tree at night. That has to be arranged.

Bhakti-caru: Srila Prabhupada, shall I offer you some milk now?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, give a little hot. (Srila Prabhupada drinks milk)

Bhakti-caru: Is it hot enough?

Srila Prabhupada: It's too sweet.

Bhakti-caru: Please wipe you hand, Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada: Inaudible.

Bhakti-caru: Would you like a little water, Srila Prabhupada? You don't want to drink water?

Srila Prabhupada: No.

One factor to consider here is that the person giggling is Prabhupada's Godbrother, Krishnadas Babaji Maharaja who was known to continuously giggle due to his constantly being in good humor from his incessant chanting of the Holy Name. Is it likely that such a great soul would participate in such a horrendous crime?

Neither does it make much sense to suggest that first the perpetrator's whisper: "Poison's going down (Giggle) Poison's going down," before Srila Prabhupada is even drinking the milk, and then the next moment they whisper: "Let's put poison in the milk."

To build a whole theory of a poison conspiracy on such vague statements is certainly far fetched. In any court of law such a weak case would immediately be dismissed. On the other hand it is a very serious offense to accuse someone of murder, especially without any conclusive proof.

Bir Krishna Goswami, Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu and Bhakti Caru Swami all met in Philadelphia on 17 January, 1998 to conduct their own analysis of the "poison whispers." Their report is where things get very interesting.

Ravindra Svarupa dasa: "Bir Krishna Maharaja and I have been able to decipher another of the mysterious "poison whispers." This is the baffling "whisper" heard as "poison ishvaya rasa" or "poison ishvara rasa," which was the third of the purportedly incriminating whispers to be found on the tape of November 10, 1977. The so-called "poison ishvaya rasa whisper" is actually part of a conversation in Bengali between a Bengali speaker and Krsna dasa Babaji. The words in question turn out to be a statement entirely in Bengali. What people have heard as "poison ishvara rasa" or something like that—is a Bengali speaker saying to Krsna dasa Babaji the clear phrase "kayek din pare asha." "Kayek din pare" means "after a few days," and the word "asha" is most likely the first part of the standard expression "asha kari", "I hope." However the sentence may end, "kayek din pare" is not "poison."

We played the selection to three intelligent native Bengali speakers, independently of each other. All of them heard close to the same thing. According to the Bengali listeners, the speaker on the tape is saying, “Apne kabe jaben? Kayek din pare asha ...” This means, “When will you go? After a few days, I hope.” And Krsna dasa Babaji answers, “Kamon?” “How?” or “All right.” In context, this makes sense. Krishna dasa Babaji had just been discussing with someone in Bengali about a journey and the possible modes of transportation. It didn’t take us much more than an hour’s work to acquire a fairly sound and objective understanding of this statement. This raises questions in our mind about the people who started this “poison whisper” campaign. These people have a lot to answer for. On the flimsiest excuse for evidence they have accused devotees who love Prabhupada of committing an unspeakably monstrous crime against him, and they have systematically spread these charges. They have put the lives of devotees in danger.”

According to the authors of the Poison CD, the latest spectrographic sound analysis methods were employed in trying to ascertain what the whispers actually said. Indeed, the PCD makers place great store on this process and its reliability.

PCD: “Before we present this report, however, it might be helpful to hear a brief explanation of the methodology, and how it is used to distinguish between different sounds. The analysis performed by George Blackwell of Miami Sound Labs is similar to the analyses by Harikesa Swami in his studio. They both used a very subjective tool for analysis: the human ear. Speech recognition has become an extremely detailed science, however, as researchers attempt to have machines perform accurate voice-recognition.

A variety of tools have been developed, but one of the oldest is unexcelled in the definitive identification of words. It is called the “wide-band voice spectrograph.” It provides detailed information about the many frequencies and intensities of various sounds which make up the spoken word. The spectrogram clearly represents the complex harmonic structure of voiced phonemes, which are the elements of sound used to construct our words. There are just forty phonemes which are combined together to produce every sound of the English language. The spectrograph is a picture of one phoneme next to the one which succeeds it. The voice spectrograph thus provides a picture, if you will, of each word, and since each word is made up of the same phonemes regardless of who speaks it, the spectrograph for each word will have a similar pattern regardless of accent, cadence, or the peculiarity of each voice. The spectrograph is

thus completely objective in identifying spoken words, unlike the human ear.

Voice spectrograph can accurately determine spoken words with a confidence level of greater than ninety percent. This analysis Mahabuddhi had done was performed by Jack Mitchell, an acoustic engineer of Computer Audio Engineering, Incorporated, located in New Mexico, and his techniques included voice spectrograph among others. It is not possible for us to present the full report in this audio format, as the report contains pertinent photographs, charts and so on, which are best understood by viewing. The full report can be found on the Hare Krishna.com website. The report itself is highly technical and gives an extremely detailed analysis of each phoneme.

So what exactly does the spectrograph find in these whispers? The first refers to the whisper above thought to be, quote: "the poison's going down[giggle] the poison's going down." Unquote. The report states, quote, "All data is consistent with the whisper-production of the two phrases, quote, "Push real hard, it's going down. The poison's going down." Unquote

The PCD makers conclude their section on the Whispers thus: "We are extremely disappointed we could find no positive manner in which to interpret these words, for they speak the unthinkable. Due to the gravity of the results, a second professional analysis will be done to confirm these findings. This report has been given to ISKCON's independent investigator."

We are also extremely disappointed. Serious accusations are being made against intimate disciples of Srila Prabhupada on, as Ravindra Svarupa prabhu says, "the flimsiest of evidence." After reading Ravindra Svarupa prabhu's report, and noting the Poison CD statement above "There are just forty phonemes which are combined together to produce every sound of the English language" we have to ask, does spectrographic sound analysis work on any language outside of English? Were the labs. technicians who conducted the tests informed that the sounds they were listening to may not be in English? Would they have been so certain about the results of their analysis if they had known there was even a remote possibility that the "whispers" were not in English?

How many who have heard the other whispers can say for sure that they are in English? One thing that is clear is that many who have heard the whispers have automatically assumed that they were in English, which is a remarkable oversight when we consider that Hindi and Bengali was being spoken at frequent intervals throughout. The only thing that is clear from the "whisper" evidence is that it is not evidence at all and any responsible person could never accept them as such.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we hope that the above has shown that no solid evidence exists either medically or through the recorded medium to establish that Srila Prabhupada was deliberately poisoned, and certainly not by his disciples. Rather, we feel that the love of those surrounding Srila Prabhupada was genuine and self-evident. It was accepted as such by His Divine Grace and as his disciples and followers, we should have no difficulty in accepting that also.

This theory has sprung up after 20 years and we believe it should be dismissed and laid to rest. Sincere devotees can go on serving Srila Prabhupada and his ISKCON society with a clear consciousness and should not be disturbed by elements who do not have the best interest of his society and devotees at heart. The only genuine poison is the theory itself.

4

MAKARADHVAJA NOT ARSENIC

A Revealing Interview with His Holiness Bhakti Vidya Purna Swami

Interviewer: Maharaja, could you tell us where you were during Srila Prabhupada's last days of his manifested pastimes.

Bhakti Vidya Purna Swami: I was in Vrndavana at that time, having gone there with the senior devotees from Mayapur who were called to be there on Srila Prabhupada's request.

Interviewer: What was your service at that time?

BVPS: I was the servant of Srila Prabhupada's personal servants. As Prabhupada's servants were very busy seeing to Srila Prabhupada's needs, I would take care of cleaning their residence, cooking and helping as needed in Srila Prabhupada's house.

Interviewer: Did you observe any situations or incidents which could have given rise to the 'Poison Theory' controversy?

BVPS: Srila Prabhupada had a dream in which he saw an Ayurvedic doctor wearing Ramanuja tilak, who knew how to make a specific medicine called 'makaradhvaja'. Srila Prabhupada was telling us that 'makaradhvaja' was very powerful medicine classified as a poison.

Interviewer: As a poison?

BVPS: Ayurvedic medicine is divided into 3 categories. The first category is fresh or dry herbs which are considered in the mode of goodness. The second, are minerals which are considered in the mode of passion. The third, are medicinal poisons, which are considered in the mode of ignorance. If the disease is very advanced, one may have to resort to very strong medicines, like minerals or poisons. Modern allopathic medicines are also generally in the category of poisons.

In using rajasic or tamasic medicines, one must see that it properly matches the condition of a disease so that it may be useful in counteracting the advancement of the disease. Sometimes, if a disease is too advanced, the medicinal poison instead of counteracting the disease, can produce side effects with the symptoms of mild poisoning.

So, after a few days, the devotees found a qualified Ayurvedic doctor who wore Ramanuja tilak in Calcutta, and had him flown to Delhi and brought to Vrindavana. Srila Prabhupada met with the doctor and they talked for a long time concerning Srila Prabhupada's condition and options for treatment. Specifically they discussed Srila Prabhupada's idea of taking 'makaradhvaja' medicine.

Previous to the doctor's arrival, Srila Prabhupada was telling us that makaradhvaja taken with honey would rejuvenate the heart and other essential organs, and if taken with pure musk would rejuvenate one's sensual powers. Prabhupada laughed and said naturally as a sannyasi he would take it with honey.

At some point after the kaviraja's discussion with Srila Prabhupada, he mentioned to us that Srila Prabhupada had an amazingly deep understanding of the Ayurveda that even many qualified vaidyas (Ayurvedic doctors) did not have. He told us that only someone with great knowledge of the Ayurveda could understand that 'makaradhvaja' would be a suitable medicine for Srila Prabhupada's condition. The doctor was very amazed with this.

In Srila Prabhupada's discussion with the doctor, they discussed the point that the 'makaradhvaja' may be too strong for Srila Prabhupada's severely deteriorated physical condition, but Srila Prabhupada insisted on trying the medicine.

Interviewer: So the kaviraja thought the 'makaradhvaja' to be inappropriate?

BVPS: No, the doctor felt it was a correct choice, but he was worried that due to Srila Prabhupada's overly weak condition the side effect of poisoning may manifest instead of rejuvenation.

Interviewer: So did Srila Prabhupada take the 'makaradhvaja'?

BVPS: Yes, the doctor prepared the 'makaradhvaja' that he had brought from Calcutta and gave it to Srila Prabhupada. The next day however while Srila Prabhupada was looking at the color of the skin on his arms and noticing a blue tint, he stated, "poison". Meaning that the 'makaradhvaja' instead of acting as hoped, was giving the side effect of poisoning.

So after some discussion between Srila Prabhupada and the doctor, it was decided to discontinue the use of 'makaradhvaja' and switch to a lighter course of medicine, made up of herbs, that the kaviraja would personally collect from the local forests of Vrindavana. That medicine continued up to Srila Prabhupada's departure.

Interviewer: So according to your opinion it would appear that you don't feel Srila Prabhupada was poisoned?

BVPS: Not at all! Even philosophically it would be impossible for anyone to poison or kill the Acharya. Look at the case of Prahlada Maharaja. He was given poison enough to kill 100 men and he was but a mere boy. Also in the Madhva line there were attempts on the lives of Acaryas,

Duryodhana also tried to poison Bhima, but in none of these cases was it ever possible to kill them by poisoning or any other means, as the Lord is in control and always protects His pure devotees.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time and insight on this matter.

5

NO MEDICAL EVIDENCE FOR POISONING OF SRILA PRABHUPADA

*by David R. Hooper B.Sc (biochem.)
(Deva Gaura Hari Das)*

The theory that [His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada] Srila Prabhupada, founder-acharya of ISKCON was poisoned with arsenic has been given recent impetus by the publishing of the book 'Someone Has Poisoned Me' by Nityananda Das. This paper presents further medical evidence from the scientific and medical literature which suggests that the symptoms of Prabhupada's physical disease were in no way consistent with arsenic poisoning. Lack of specific clinical symptoms of arsenicosis such as Mees' lines, hyperkeratosis and raindrop pigmentation strongly suggest that arsenic poisoning was not to blame. Rather, his condition was symptomatic of type 2 diabetes mellitus, causing high blood pressure, peripheral neuropathy and heart problems, including myocardial infarction and stroke. In later stages this progressed to diabetic nephropathy (severe kidney damage due to diabetes), which led to uremia (buildup of metabolic toxins which are normally excreted by the kidneys) causing gastrointestinal disturbances and loss of appetite. In the final stages the loss of appetite and poor digestion led to malnutrition, and ultimately total systemic collapse. This diagnosis has been confirmed by doctors Jacob and McIrving (who treated Prabhupada in his final months) as well as Prabhupada's personal nurse Abhirama Das.

Introduction

Conspiracy theories regarding the poisoning of an important personality have always captured the hearts and minds of people in general, and the alleged poisoning of Srila Prabhupada is no exception. This paper aims to concentrate on the clinical symptoms manifest in Srila Prabhupada's body throughout his well-documented physical illness. It deals primarily with 1. The lack of symptoms of arsenic poisoning, and 2. The marked presence of specific symptoms associated with chronic diabetes.

Clinical Symptoms of Arsenicosis

The clinical features of arsenic poisoning include multi-organ failure and other non-specific systemic indications, which sometimes lead to incorrect or delayed diagnosis. However, there are specific symptoms peculiar to arsenicosis. Bansal et al.¹ report that prolonged sub-acute poisoning usually causes neuropathy (peripheral nervous system damage), with characteristic skin changes such as hyperkeratosis (thickening of skin) of palms and soles, hyperpigmentation or raindrop shaped depigmentation over the skin of the trunk and Mees' lines over the nails. Shin² documents gastrointestinal upset, multi-organ failure, dermatological lesions and Mees' lines as common findings and Dipankar Das³ et al. report arsenical skin lesions as the most commonly observed symptom in a study of over 175,000 people drinking arsenic contaminated water in West Bengal, India.

Therefore, while arsenic poisoning causes multi-system damage that imitates many other diseases, the dermatological features (keratosis of palms and soles, raindrop pigmentation), polyneuropathy, and Mees' lines are more specific to arsenicosis and shall be dealt with in more detail, with specific reference to the clinical features displayed by Srila Prabhupada.

Dermatological Features

Hyperpigmentation is reported to be the most common change seen in people exposed to arsenic. This increased skin colouring can occur anywhere, but is accentuated in areas which are more heavily pigmented such as the groin or areola.⁴ There may be areas of lighter pigment among the darker areas, giving the overall appearance of "raindrops on a dusty road."^{4&5} Hyperkeratosis, a thickening of the skin on the palms and soles, is also a very common indicator of arsenic poisoning.^{1&3} This is a very obvious clinical symptom which can be observed by anyone having close contact with the patient.

From reports by Srila Prabhupada's disciples who served him intimately during his final weeks, it is clear that none of them noticed any of these kinds of dermatological changes. These disciples were intimately serving, massaging and constantly monitoring Prabhupada's health. They were noting carefully his fluid intake, diet, regularity of bodily functions, medications and their effects. We could assume that if such dermatological changes had taken place, then certainly these disciples would have noticed them.

Prabhupada's personal nurse, Abhirama Das gives a typical response to the question of hyperkeratosis:

*I massaged his feet and hands for a minimum of one hour every day. Some days it was two or three hours. His skin was unusually soft, and his hands and feet were the most flexible and soft that I have ever experienced.*²²

Personal servant Hari Sauri Das confirms this fact:

*Srila Prabhupada's skin was soft and smooth right to the very end. I always marveled at how soft the soles of his feet and the palms of his hands were when I used to massage him (I mentioned this in the first volume of my Diary also), and I didn't notice any difference at all during the last six weeks in Vrindavana.*¹⁵

In his book, Nityananda Das presents the alleged poisoning of Napoleon as accepted fact among the scientific and medical community. Interestingly, most of the available literature on the topic actually debunks the idea that Napoleon was poisoned. In their paper on the non-poisonous death of Napoleon, Doctors Hindmarsh and Corso^{6&7} use the same reasoning to counter the allegation of poisoning as that given above: The most prominent dermatologic feature of chronic arsenic poisoning is also constant: raindrop pigmentation of the skin, particularly around the axillae, groins, temples, eye, neck and nipples, although it may also extend over the shoulders and chest anteriorly and posteriorly. Hyperkeratosis of the palms of the hands and soles of the feet is also often present, frequently associated with arsenic "corns". These features were clearly not present at death, as Henry reports that the skin was "white and delicate as were the hands and arms."⁷

Dermatological effects are the most common indicators of arsenicosis. Therefore the lack of observable dermatological signs and symptoms alone throws great doubt on the arsenic poisoning theory.

Peripheral Neuropathy

The most common effect of arsenic intoxication on the nervous system is the appearance of a symmetrical polyneuropathy (nerve damage) which may appear within days of a large dose, or gradually with smaller regular doses of arsenic. This results in loss of touch and pain sensation in the extremities.⁸

When making a diagnosis of neuropathic symptoms it is important to determine whether the disease is a polyneuropathy or mononeuropathy multiplex. Polyneuropathy refers to bilaterally symmetrical affection of peripheral nerves (i.e. both arms or both legs), whereas mononeuropathy multiplex randomly affects different nerves.⁹

There is a large body of literature confirming clinical polyneuropathy as a symptom of arsenicosis, as exemplified by the study of J Oh Shin²: In all cases, arsenic neuropathy was clinically characterized by a sub acutely developing symmetrical sensory-motor polyneuropathy.²

Nityananda Das has asserted that the neuropathy exhibited by Srila Prabhupada was due to arsenic intoxication, citing the example of Prabhupada suffering from paralysis and extreme pain in one leg. However,

this is clearly a mononeuropathy, rather than a bilaterally symmetrical polyneuropathy.

One of the primary causes of sub-acute mononeuropathy is diabetes, whereas sub-acute symmetrical polyneuropathy may be caused by nutritional deficiencies, drug intoxication or heavy metal poisoning, including arsenic.⁹

Although the extreme pain and paralysis in Prabhupada's left leg is consistent with a mononeuropathy resulting from diabetes, it is clearly not a symmetrical polyneuropathy and therefore certainly rules out arsenic poisoning as the cause of this symptom. The marked absence of a symmetrical polyneuropathy further undermines the idea that Prabhupada was suffering symptoms of arsenic poisoning.

Mees' Lines

A peculiar phenomenon associated with arsenic intoxication is Mees' lines, which are transverse bands of white and dark lines (usually from 1 to 3) on the nails of the fingers and toes. This is caused by band like precipitations of arsenic within the keratin matrix of the fingernails, and is first noticed approximately eleven days after onset of disease and remains as a succession of bands for over three months.¹⁰ Quecedo et al.¹¹ reported three out of four cases of arsenic poisoning demonstrating prominent Mees' lines, with these being an important clue for diagnosis. Shin described Mees' lines as "the most helpful diagnostic finding of arsenic polyneuropathy"², with over 80% of cases exhibiting this symptom.

Abhirama Das gives first hand testimony about the clarity of Prabhupada's nails:

I always pinched his nails, during massage as a part of stimulating his nerves. His nails were shiny, pink, smooth, with no discoloration or white lines.²²

Again, those who personally massaged Prabhupada's hands and legs daily failed to notice any unusual lines on the nails of his hands or feet. Thus another classic sign of arsenicosis is found to be missing from the symptoms shown by Srila Prabhupada.

Summary of arsenic symptoms

The only symptoms of arsenicosis which Srila Prabhupada displayed (gastro-intestinal upset and multi-organ failure) are those which are non-specific and common to many other systemic diseases, most notably diabetes. The distinct lack of any of the symptoms specifically associated with arsenic poisoning (hyperkeratosis, raindrop pigmentation, sub-acute polyneuropathy, Mees' lines) throws grave doubt on the hypothesis that Prabhupada was actually suffering from arsenicosis.

One may make a case for such poisoning based on personal interpretation and speculatory innuendo, but based on available medical litera-

ture and the clinical history of Srila Prabhupada's illness, such a claim has no support whatsoever.

Clinical Symptoms of Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes mellitus is one of the most prevalent and disruptive diseases affecting the older population, with approximately 10% of all people over 65 years of age suffering from the disease.¹⁶ The cause is improper insulin utilization by the body, and the clinical features are well documented.

Diabetes damages small blood vessels throughout the body, affecting the kidneys as well as other organs and tissues including skin, nerves, muscles, intestines and the heart. Patients with diabetes can develop high blood pressure as well as rapid hardening of the arteries, which can lead to heart disease and eye disorders.¹⁶

The fact that Srila Prabhupada suffered from diabetes was common knowledge among ISKCON devotees from at least 1969.^{15&20} Many doctors had diagnosed it and he himself was aware of it:

Gargamuni: *My father, he also used to get swelling, but this was due to diabetes.*

Prabhupada: *I have got diabetes also. (Room conversation January 19, 1977. Bhubaneswara.¹²)*

He also gave his personal servant Sruta Kirti Das and nurse Abhirama Das the same information.^{21&23} Dr. McIrving, who treated Srila Prabhupada in 1977, made the following diagnosis of his condition:

1. Due to diabetes, he suffered swelling which affected the flow in his urinary tract over many years
2. He had since birth a slightly restricted urethra which further reduced the urinary flow.
3. The combination of these two factors had put constant and harmful back pressure on his kidneys, which along with a general deterioration due to age had inflicted serious renal damage.¹³

Dr. Karl Jacob also confirms the diagnoses:

Srila Prabhupada's chronic diabetes, which was never medically properly treated, was bound to lead to other serious consequent diseases which had to increasingly manifest in his body: such as premature aging and degradation of blood vessels, microangiopathy, high blood pressure, heart problems, and diabetic nephropathy (severe kidney damage) In addition his urethra was constricted which put a constant back pressure on the kidneys, increasing the renal insufficiency and inducing further damage.¹³

Prabhupada exhibited many of the classic symptoms of type 2 diabetes mellitus (increased thirst, increased need to urinate, cardiovascular disease with heart attack and stroke, kidney disease). These will be documented to further substantiate the prognosis of diabetes mellitus.

Polydipsia (increased thirst)

Most people with type 2 diabetes experience an increased thirst along with increased need to urinate, this is one of the most common signs of diabetes type 2.¹⁹

Although the fact that Prabhupada kept water by his side constantly is well known, the medical implication of this has previously gone unnoticed. Srila Prabhupada's personal servants Hari Sauri Das and Srutakirti Das confirm that Prabhupada drank a lot of water. He always kept a jug on his desk, and he frequently drank from it.

This is certainly consistent with the clinical features of type 2 diabetes mellitus, and further points to this being the underlying cause for Prabhupada's degenerating health.

Polyuria (increased need to urinate)

This is the other most common effect of type 2 diabetes. This is documented by Hari Sauri Das in his diary of May 4, 1976:

“He is again having trouble with uremia, using the bathroom every hour.”¹⁷

Cardiovascular disease

A common complication of diabetes mellitus is cardiovascular disease, often leading to myocardial infarction (heart attack) or stroke.¹¹ This is caused by diabetic arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).¹⁶ Prabhupada's history of cardiovascular disease is well known. In September of 1965, he suffered two severe heart attacks while on board the Jaladuta cargo ship on his way to America. Again in May of 1967 he suffered from serious heart palpitations and a stroke which paralyzed the left side of his body.¹⁴

This is referred to in many recorded conversations, including the following one from 1976:

Prabhupada: Because the time was taken, extension. Then, in 1967, in July, I thought, “Now the health is broken.” I was very sick after heartstroke. So I thought “Now I shall not exist. So let me go to Vrndavana and die there.” So I came back in July 1967. So this Brahmananda and others, they were crying when I got on the boat. Hm? The heart was so weak...¹²

Prabhupada's personal servant, Hari Sauri Das also reports similar problems in 1976:

He is experiencing disturbing heart palpitations and his uremia has caused his legs and feet to swell again. It was a strain for him to even be out.¹⁷

Thus the symptoms of cardiovascular disease with myocardial infarction and stroke were prominent in Srila Prabhupada's condition from when he first left India in 1965, adding further weight to the prognosis of chronic diabetes, causing heart disease and later kidney failure.

Nephropathy (kidney damage)

Diabetes is the single leading cause of all chronic kidney failure in the U.S.¹⁶ and at least one third of people with diabetes develop kidney disease.¹¹

Kidney disease was repeatedly diagnosed by doctors who attended to Srila Prabhupada.

Tamal Krishna: No, but all along, all of the doctors say it is kidney trouble. All of the doctors, allopathic and kaviraja agree kidneys are defective. And the surgeon in London, he also said so.¹² (Room conversation, October 20, 1977. Vrindavan)

The National Kidney Foundation (U.S.) lists swelling of the legs and increased need to urinate as sure signs that a diabetic is developing kidney disease.¹⁶ These symptoms were repeatedly reported as early as 1975 by Hari Sauri Das in his personal diary, and Prabhupada himself attributed it to kidney damage causing uremia.

Prabhupada is not feeling well; swelling in his legs, feet and hands trouble him. To see his body puffed with fluid is very disturbing. Prabhupada said this is due to uremia, a toxic condition caused by waste products in the blood normally eliminated in the urine. It makes it very difficult for him to climb the steps to his apartment when returning from the temple. (December 20, 1975)

He is again having trouble with uremia, using the bathroom every hour. His feet are badly swollen and he is suffering dizzy spells. (May 4, 1976)

He was ashen, and told me he was experiencing severe kidney pain and could not translate. It was the same problem he had a few days ago. (July 15, 1976)¹⁷

Doctors Jacob and McIrving confirm that severe kidney damage had taken place, brought about by prolonged untreated diabetes. All available clinical evidence and information from the medical literature fully supports their findings.

Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is the most frequent cause of new blindness in adults aged 20-74.¹¹ Damage is caused by constriction of small blood vessels in the retina, which impairs vision. In his last 2 months, Prabhupada suffered from partial blindness.²⁰ This is consistent with diabetic retinopathy.

Peripheral Neuropathy

Diabetes mellitus is often characterized by a tingling sensation and loss of feeling in the legs.¹¹ Due to Prabhupada's policy of not discussing his health situation unless it made it impossible for him to work, it is not known if he experienced these more subtle clinical signs of diabetes.

Srila Prabhupada exhibited motor-sensory loss in his left leg during the final month of his illness, as documented in the diary of his personal secretary, Tamal Krishna Goswami.¹⁸

Prabhupada's left leg was beginning to feel very heavy. When he asked my opinion whether it was paralyzed, I suggested that the blood was not circulating because of inactivity. (October 23, 1977)

"I am not getting strength. Even to lift my leg, I need help. Practically my left leg is not working. What should be done now, you consider." (November 11, 1977)

The problem in Prabhupada's left leg, where he experienced severe pain and paralysis during his last month, could have been due to a diabetic sub-acute mononeuropathy, as described by Herting and Frohberg⁹. As discussed earlier, it was obviously not a bilaterally symmetrical polyneuropathy, characteristic of heavy metal poisoning.

Dry, Itchy Skin

The American Diabetes Association describes dry, itchy skin as one of the six most common signs of type 2 diabetes.¹⁹

Prabhupada's routine of having a full body massage with mustard oil daily prevented his skin from drying out, however, itchiness was experienced by him during the last six months of his illness, as described in Tamal Krishna Goswami's diary.¹⁸

When Prabhupada woke up at six thirty, he had me scratch his back. Then he went to sit in the garden. (June 7, 1977)

When he wakes up, usually around 6:00 a.m., he opens his eyes and looks at me. Then after some time, he holds out his arms and I pull him up. I sit behind him and scratch his back, which has lines in the skin from lying down. At this time, he usually talks casually. (July 4, 1977)

Prabhupada interrupted and asked for someone to scratch his back. Kirtanananda Swami responded. Prabhupada asked, "Anyone can scratch very hard?" Kirtanananda Swami objected, "I'm afraid you'll have no back left!" (October 9, 1977)

That Prabhupada experienced itchiness of his skin is a further positive sign that he was suffering from advanced diabetes type 2.

Table 1. Symptoms of arsenicosis and their presence or absence in Srila Prabhupada's condition.

Clinical symptoms of arsenicosis^{1,2,6}

Clinical feature of Prabhupada's condition

Raindrop pigmentation	No
Mees' lines	No
Dermatological lesions	No
Hyperkeratosis	No
Symmetrical sub-acute polyneuropathy	No
Gastrointestinal upset	Yes
Multiple organ failure	Yes

Table 2. Symptoms of diabetes and their presence or absence in Srila Prabhupada's condition.

Clinical symptoms of diabetes mellitus^{9,11,19}

Clinical feature of Prabhupada's condition

Polydypsia (excessive thirst)	Yes
Polyuria (increased need to urinate)	Yes
Heart attack	Yes
Stroke	Yes
Nephropathy (kidney damage)	Yes
High blood pressure	Yes
Retinopathy	Yes
Sub-acute moneuropathy	Yes
Repeated or hard to heal infections of the skin or bladder	Yes
Dry, itchy skin	Yes

Table 3. Symptoms of diabetes advancing to kidney disease and their presence or absence in Prabhupada's condition.

Clinical symptoms of diabetes advancing to kidney disease¹⁶

Clinical feature of Prabhupada's condition

Swelling of legs and hands	Yes
Morning sickness, nausea and vomiting	Yes
High blood pressure	Yes
Polyuria (increased need to urinate)	Yes

Protein in the urine	Yes
Weakness, paleness and anemia	Yes

Conclusion

There is no strong evidence either clinical or medical, that Srila Prabhupada suffered from chronic arsenic poisoning. The only symptoms of arsenicosis he experienced were those of a highly non-specific nature, namely gastrointestinal upset and multiple organ failure. None of the clinically specific signs attributable to arsenic intoxication were observed in Srila Prabhupada.

Interestingly, there are many parallels between the claims made by Nityananda Das and those made by S. Forshufvud²² regarding the death of Napoleon. In their 1996 rebuttal to the Napoleon poisoning theory, Doctors Corso and Hindmarsh make the following observations in summing up their case.

Napoleon failed to show some of the classic signs of arsenic poisoning, including thickening and pigmentation of the palms of the hands, irregularities of the nail beds and a sensory neuropathy of the lower legs. Specific note was made at autopsy of the clear and almost ivory-like quality of his skin, certainly something not seen in someone suffering from chronic arsenic poisoning. Also, Ernest Chioda, a noted medical toxicologist and lawyer, stated at the debate that both from a medical and a legal standpoint, no case whatsoever can be made for the poisoning of Napoleon as a criminal act.

On the other hand, there is significant and compelling evidence attested to by eight doctors all present at Napoleon's autopsy that indeed he died of a cancer of the stomach complicated or associated with a perforating chronic ulcer.⁶

In the case of Srila Prabhupada, we also find that there is significant and compelling evidence, based on the clinical record and testimony of doctors who personally treated him, that he was suffering primarily the symptoms of advanced diabetes, which, having gone untreated for decades, led to further complications, most notably coronary heart disease and kidney failure. In contrast, the theory that he was poisoned with arsenic is utterly baseless and is not substantiated by the medical evidence in any way whatsoever.

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6

HAIR ANALYSIS SHOWS NO SIGNS OF POISONING

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(With specific reference to claims made in the book 'Someone Has Poisoned Me' by Nityananda Das.)

In this paper we will document important scientific facts regarding analysis of hair arsenic levels in Srila Prabhupada's hair relics. Nityananda das has claimed that Prabhupada's hair levels were recorded at 3ppm and that this represents solid evidence that "undoubtedly Srila Prabhupada was maliciously poisoned."

We will show that this assertion is UNTRUE by referring to various authoritative scientific literatures and experts in the fields of toxicology, medicine and neutron activation analysis.

Scientific facts about arsenic in hair:

- 1) Arsenic is the twentieth most abundant element in the earth's crust.
- 2) The real figure for the testing of Prabhupada's hair sample was NOT 3ppm arsenic but 2.6ppm.
- 3) Scientific studies have shown levels of 4.8ppm (Mexico City) and 3ppm (Glasgow) average arsenic content of hair in normal (unexposed) populations.
- 4) Research proves that persons who are malnourished exhibit a 50% increase in the concentration of trace metals in their hair, due to slowing of hair growth while the rate of metal deposition remains constant.
- 5) Results of up to 1.4ppm arsenic (Didima Mataji) were found in Mayapur devotees, and up to 3.36 ppm in persons who only occasionally visited the Ganges arsenic affected area.
- 6) By far the major source of elimination of arsenic is through the kidneys and urine. One would expect elevated levels of these toxins in the blood and hair of a person suffering serious kidney malfunction.

- 7) Forensic pathologists agree that even high levels of arsenic cannot on their own be accepted as proof of poisoning without specific clinical symptoms of arsenic poisoning.
- 8) Hair analysis for arsenic is a very unreliable indicator of serum arsenic levels when a specific individual is tested without a range of reference values from a group of the same time and place for comparison.
- 9) Expert scientists who are presently working in the field of hair analysis and neutron activation agree that any amount up to 10 ppm arsenic can be considered 'normal' levels of arsenic.

Srila Prabhupada's hair samples do not show evidence of Arsenic poisoning. The actual level of Prabhupada's hair was 2.6ppm, and scientific studies have shown level of 4.8ppm and 3ppm average arsenic content of hair is normal. Arsenic is the one of the most abundant elements in the earth's crust.

Discussion

1. Arsenic is the twentieth most abundant element in the earth's crust, and is found in many pesticides, smelting processes, paints, underground water supplies and traditional oriental (including Indian) remedies. It is common knowledge that arsenic is a deadly poison, and many people imagine arsenic to be a rare chemical manufactured in some exotic chemical laboratory. Therefore many devotees feel shocked when told that Srila Prabhupada's hair relics contain trace amounts of arsenic. However, the actual fact is that arsenic is the 20th most common element on this planet and pervades almost everything in our environment, including our own bodies.
2. The real figure for the testing of Prabhupada's hair sample was not 3ppm arsenic but 2.6ppm. In his book, Nityananda Das reports two different tests done on Srila Prabhupada's hair relics. One is reported as being 1.1 ppm and the other "almost ppm." He then goes on to use "3 ppm" as the accepted figure. However, we have recently been provided with the original document from Dr. Steve Morris of the University of Missouri who performed the tests, which states that the actual figure was 2.6 ppm arsenic. Thus Nityananda Das, for reasons best known to himself, reports a figure of 1.1 ppm as it is, but decides that 2.6 ppm needs to be rounded up to 3 ppm. Readers who are familiar with our previous papers on this topic will recognize Nityananda Das's inimitable reporting methods, and will not be astonished to find such anomalies in his work. Later in this paper we will give evidence to show that this figure of 2.6 ppm is in no way proof of arsenic poisoning.

3. Scientific studies have shown results of 4.8ppm (Mexico City) and 3ppm (Glasgow) average arsenic content of hair in normal (un-exposed) populations. MIT lists 0.13 - 3.71 ppm as the range of average values for normal (healthy) persons.

In 1997, Dr. Armienta of the Geophysics Institute of the University of Mexico conducted a series of tests on water and hair samples from residents of Zimapan in central Mexico. For some years residents had complained of various ailments, which were caused from arsenic exposure via local well water. The tests showed hair concentrations of arsenic in the affected townspeople to be 9.22 ppm. Even more interesting was their results for a reference group of unaffected 'normal' people. This group was taken from residents of Mexico City and showed the average concentration was 4.8 ppm arsenic in hair. Remember that these are perfectly healthy individuals with no particular exposure to arsenic. The authors explained that the high value could be explained by the air pollution prevalent in Mexico City, as arsenic binds tightly to the keratin molecules in hair, whether via sweat or from external sources.

Another study performed in the 1970's showed an average of 3 ppm hair arsenic in the population of Glasgow, again presumably due to high pollution levels. Remember that these figures are an average, which means that some of the "healthy" subjects tested contained levels that were much higher still than 3 or 4.8 ppm. Therefore the fact that Srila Prabhupada's hair contained 2.6 ppm cannot be taken as proof of poisoning. Rather this value falls within the range of average values reported in various studies around the world.

4. Research shows that persons who are malnourished exhibit 50% higher than normal content of metals in their hair, due to the hair growth slowing markedly while the rate of metal deposition into the hair remains constant.

In 1983, the New York Hospital Medical Department conducted experiments into the pitfalls of hair analysis for trace element concentration. They found a peculiar phenomenon, whereby the concentration of trace metals in hair actually increased when a patient was malnourished. This was due to the fact that the rate of hair growth slowed markedly under conditions of malnourishment, while the rate of deposition of trace elements from the blood and external environment remained constant. This produces an artificially elevated level of trace metal in the hair compared to the actual level in the bloodstream.

For example, if 0.05 mg of metal were deposited in the hair per day, which grew at a rate of 2 mg per day, the concentration would be $0.05 / 2 = 0.025$ metal per hair mass. However, if the hair growth slowed to 1.2 mg per day, the apparent hair concentration would rise

to $0.05 / 1.2 = 0.040$ metal per hair weight. Thus a 40% decrease in hair growth corresponds to a 50% increase in trace metal concentrations.

It is well known that Srila Prabhupada ate very little for most of 1977. Bhakti Caru Swami, who cooked for him for most of this time confirms this:

When His Divine Grace was in Bombay, after the Mayapur festival in 1977, I started to cook for him. Although he was eating something, but it was very little and he even commented that if he could just eat two chapatis that would indicate his good health. However, he could not even eat that much. When Srila Prabhupada arrived in Vrndavan (May 1977) after giving his arrival darshan to all the devotees there, Srila Prabhupada called me to his room and told me not to cook for him and persuade him to eat. He told me, "What's the use of eating when there is no appetite." From then onwards his food intake was reduced to practically nothing.

Srila Prabhupada's hair growth certainly slowed during 1977, and this is also confirmed by his personal servants. Therefore one would expect that the content of metals in his hair would be higher due to constant exposure to trace levels of heavy metals and marked decrease in hair growth.

5. Results of up to 1.4ppm arsenic (Didima Mataji) were found in Mayapur devotees, and up to 3.36 ppm in persons who only occasionally visited the Ganges arsenic affected area.

Nityananda Das claims that "normally one would expect to find from less than 0.05 ppm arsenic up to perhaps 0.1 to 0.2 ppm, depending on exposure... and that farmers regularly exposed to pesticides MIGHT temporarily attain a level of 1.0ppm, which is probably why so many have cancer."

However, we don't have to look very far to discount this speculative reasoning. Recent testing done on some of the resident devotees of Mayapur have found that they do in fact contain hair arsenic levels above 1 ppm, and are not suffering any ill effects from such levels.

Nityananda Das goes on to make a dramatic embellishment of the 3 ppm figure, saying it is "15 to 60 times over average. The presence of such high amounts of the world's deadliest poison in Srila Prabhupada's hair confirms: Srila Prabhupada was poisoned with arsenic."

However, using these figures, the levels of arsenic in the hair of Didima Mataji are also 30 times the "average" level. If Nityananda is so sure about these figures, why isn't he also suggesting we launch a full investigation into who is poisoning Didima?

Nityananda Das tries to pass off the West Bengal arsenic crisis by saying, “There was some news a few years back about health problems in Bengal due to arsenic contamination in deep well water. However, Srila Prabhupada left Mayapur, Bengal in March 1977 after a stay of six weeks.”

In contrast, a 1995 study done by Jadavpur University described the situation as a crisis, titling their research paper “The Biggest Arsenic Calamity in the World” saying that at least 30 million people in six districts of West Bengal are living with levels of arsenic higher than the level recommended by the WHO. A list of the affected areas extended all along the Ganges delta, with Navadwip being specifically mentioned as one of the seriously affected areas. This study reported hair arsenic concentrations from one affected family in Murshidabad as ranging from 4.78 up to 9.78 ppm.

Of special relevance to this discussion, two additional members of the family who only came home occasionally and just happened to be there on the day of the testing, had hair arsenic levels of 2.35 and 3.36 ppm respectively. Neither displayed any adverse health effects.

It is not clear when was the last time the clippers that contained the hair sample were used. The very last time Prabhupada was shaved was on September 22, 1977. However, Tamal Krishna Maharaja reports that he shaved up Prabhupada with a razor blade (as reported in TKG’s Diary). Therefore the hair clippers were almost certainly not used after Prabhupada came back from England on September 12. This puts the date of last use back to at least mid-August. Prabhupada’s servants confirm that his hair growth had slowed very dramatically throughout 1977. This, together with the possibility that other clippers or razors were used to shave Prabhupada’s hair, makes it possible, if not probable, that the hair remnants from the clippers in Vrindavana are from much earlier in the year.

In fact, the only confirmed use of the Wahl clippers in 1977 comes from Hari Sauri Das who remembers shaving Prabhupada in March with these very clippers. If the clippers were last used in March, April or May, the hair remnants would contain growth from Prabhupada’s six week stay in Mayapur up to 22 March. This factor, together with Prabhupada’s travel through polluted Indian cities and the concentrating effect of slow hair growth, as will be explained below, means that a figure of 2.6 ppm arsenic is by no means an unusual amount.

6. By far the major source of elimination of arsenic is through the kidneys and urine. If someone with serious kidney malfunction was exposed to even small amounts of arsenic via water or medicines, one would expect elevated levels of these toxins in the sweat and sebaceous secretions (and therefore the hair) due to lack of sufficient kidney function to eliminate the toxins.

It is well known that arsenic and other heavy metals have a debilitating effect on the ability of the kidneys to eliminate toxins. However, just as high blood arsenic levels damage the kidneys, an already malfunctioning kidney will also raise the blood concentration of such toxins due to not properly eliminating them via the urine.

Studies show that at least half the total amount of arsenic from water or environmental sources is eliminated by the kidneys and passed out through the urine. Someone suffering from serious kidney damage would have a dramatically reduced ability to eliminate arsenic from the bloodstream. Therefore whatever trace amounts one would normally expect to be deposited in the hair and other tissues would be elevated under these conditions.

In our previous paper 'No Medical Evidence for Poisoning of Srila Prabhupada', a detailed description of Prabhupada's major kidney malfunctioning is given. With this in mind, we can understand that the figure of 2.6 ppm arsenic concentration in Prabhupada's hair is in no way conclusive of poisoning. Considering the state of his kidneys, if Prabhupada were given any amount of arsenic one would expect a far higher level of arsenic in his hair than this.

7. Arsenic gets into hair via sweat and other secretions and binds strongly onto the keratin molecules in hair. Because of this it is impossible to distinguish between arsenic sweated from the skin and then bound to the hair and arsenic that later binds to hair through contamination from an external source. Therefore forensic pathologists agree that even very high levels of arsenic cannot on their own be accepted as proof of poisoning without specific clinical symptoms of arsenic poisoning.

Scientific studies have shown that arsenic gets into hair via sweat and sebaceous secretions and then firmly adsorbs itself to the keratin proteins in the hair matrix. This was discovered through a number of studies, including the work of Young and Rice who found arsenic in the hair of guinea pigs injected with sodium arsenite beyond the point it could have reached by hair growth alone. Similar studies have confirmed these findings.

Therefore, it is impossible to discern between arsenic that is bound to hair via ingestion, from that which binds itself to hair from an external source, either while the person was alive or while the hair relic was in storage.

For this reason, forensic pathologists are very wary of accepting a diagnosis of arsenic poisoning unless there are clear indications via clinical symptoms (i.e. hyperkeratosis, sensory polyneuropathy, rain-drop pigmentation, Mees lines etc).

We have covered the subject of Prabhupada's distinct lack of clinical arsenicosis symptoms in our papers 'No Medical Evidence' and 'Nityananda's Diagnosis 1'.

This point is explained nicely by Dr. Corso of Yale University Medical School and Dr. Hindmarsh of the Department of Pathology and Biochemistry at Ottawa University, in their 1996 paper which debunked the spurious theory that Napoleon Bonaparte was poisoned by arsenic.

"As every forensic scientist know, the diagnosis of chronic arsenic poisoning cannot be made upon elevated arsenic concentrations in hair alone because external contamination of the hair by arsenic can produce a sustained increase in hair arsenic that cannot be differentiated from the increases that occur from arsenic ingestion. Thus, before a diagnosis of chronic arsenic poisoning can be made, the characteristic clinical features must be present as well as an appropriately elevated arsenic concentration in hair. In addition, external contamination of the hair by arsenic must be excluded."

Doctors Corso and Hindmarsh further elaborate, listing the most common and constant clinical features of arsenic poisoning, and their noted absence in the symptoms displayed by Napoleon.

The most prominent dermatological feature of chronic arsenic poisoning is also constant: raindrop pigmentation of the skin, particularly around the axillae, groins, temple. Eyes, neck, and nipples, although it may also extend over the shoulders and chest anteriorly and posteriorly. Hyperkeratosis of the palms of the hands and soles of the feet is also often present, frequently associated with arsenical "corns" These features were clearly not present at death, as Henry reports that the skin at autopsy was "white and delicate, as were the hands and arms."

The spurious theory of Napoleon's poisoning and that of Srila Prabhupada share many common aspects. It should be noted however, that the figures obtained for Napoleons hair analysis included levels of 16.9, 15.3, and 11.8 ppm arsenic. Still the consensus among toxicologists is that the poisoning theory is not acceptable due to lack of characteristic symptoms, and an inability to rule out environmental contamination.

Certainly a similar theory would be even more unacceptable when the highest hair level recorded was only 2.6 ppm.

8. Hair analysis for arsenic is a very unreliable indicator of serum arsenic levels when a specific individual is tested without a range of reference values from a group of the same time and place for comparison. This unreliability is even more marked when a small amount of hair sample is tested.

Because arsenic can be found in quite high concentrations in some parts of the world and practically doesn't exist in others, the reference range of values for 'normal' unexposed populations is very wide. In some places the average arsenic content of hair is seen to be approx. 0.13 ppm, while in other places, especially industrialized cities with pollution problems, or areas with arsenic in underground water supplies, the average levels can be as high as 3 ppm or even 5 ppm.

Thus while one can say what one would normally 'expect' for arsenic content in a person's hair, there is no hard and fast rule for arsenic levels. Rogers et al. from the Toxicology Department at Cambridge, list the "range of mean values reported in 15 different studies involving normal (healthy) sample donors" to be 0.13 - 3.71 ppm arsenic. Thus many studies over the years have shown that normal, healthy population groups can and do have arsenic levels in their hair in excess of 3 ppm. The standard reference work 'Comprehensive Review in Toxicology for Emergency Clinicians', explains that arsenic concentration of hair varies with nutritional, environmental and physiological factors. Nityananda Das listed this book as one of his reference materials, and in it he would have read, (if he did read it) that the upper limit of NORMAL arsenic concentration with 99% confidence in people NOT exposed to arsenic is 5 ppm.

Nityananda Das gives a characteristically emotion-charged lead up to the "3ppm" figure by saying that only "farmers who are regularly exposed over a long term basis to agricultural herbicides and pesticides containing arsenic compounds MIGHT temporarily attain a level of 1.0 parts per million." As we can see from the above studies this is patently UNTRUE.

In his report on the 2.6 ppm figure, Dr. Morris gives no real interpretation of the results, except to say that this figure is approximately 20 times the figure one would expect to find as a normal average among unexposed individuals living in the United states. However there are obvious difficulties in a blanket application of this figure for all times and places. We need only to look at the proven arsenic levels of Didima Mataji of 1.4 ppm. Using the above interpretation, her hair contains more than ten times the average one would expect for someone living in the United States.

Because of the large range of "normal" values for hair arsenic levels, some authorities actually recommend that these values shouldn't be relied upon at all when applied to an individual, but should only be used where a group of individuals from the same area can be measured and compared to the average of that particular group.

In the standard handbook of clinical toxicology 'Clinical Management of Poisoning and Drug Overdose', Doctors Hall and Robertson make this point very strongly with regard to arsenic hair analysis.

Under no circumstances should any credence be paid to hair analysis of an individual patient, unless perhaps it is conducted as part of an epidemiologic investigation of a group of patients. Such results ought to be applied only to the group.

We can see the work of Armienta et al. cited above illustrates this point nicely. Their reference group had an average concentration of 4.8 ppm arsenic, while the affected group showed 9.22 ppm. By analyzing the data in terms of the particular locales, they were able to obtain meaningful results. However, had they blindly followed the rule of 0.13 ppm as the standard level, the reference (unaffected) group would have showed more than 35 times the average for unexposed persons. This is the kind of reasoning Nityananda Das has (mis)used to try and make his case.

Another problem with the analysis performed on the hair relic from Prabhupada's clippers is that it is an extremely small quantity of sample. Generally, forensic toxicologists prefer to have a reasonably large group of hair clippings, taken from various parts of the head. Due to large variations in concentrations of metals among different hair strands, it is important to obtain a reasonably large sample amount for testing, otherwise the results may be misleading. The amount of hair assayed by Dr. Morris was 0.0013 grams, a very small amount that was caught between the blades of the clippers. It is an extremely tenuous proposition to base a murder case on such a small amount of hair, especially as the amount of arsenic - 2.6 ppm - is in itself nothing like proof of arsenical intoxication.

Doctors Corso and Hindmarsh make the same point when exposing the fallaciousness of the Napoleon poisoning theory.

Even when external contamination can be excluded by other evidence, the relationship between the degree of poisoning and hair arsenic levels is only approximate. Traditional interpretations are based on mean concentrations found in a minimum of 1 gram of hair, usually collected from several sites on the head. Variations from hair to hair, and even along the same strand of hair, are large, making the interpretation of data derived from individual hairs or from specific locations on a single hair less predictive than mean levels from larger samples. Therefore the results obtained from a meager 0.0015 grams of sample should be viewed with extreme caution, especially if they do not indicate an obviously elevated level of arsenic, i.e. more than 10 ppm.

9. Expert scientists who are presently working in the field of hair analysis and neutron activation agree that levels under 10ppm cannot be considered indicative of arsenic poisoning.

During investigations into the poison issue, we contacted various laboratories across the United States regarding possible testing of a

hair sample from Srila Prabhupada. These professionals provided a number of interesting facts that are very relevant to this discussion.

Keep in mind that the information relayed below was given totally unsolicited from persons who have no connection with ISKCON, nor even had any idea about why we were enquiring about testing for arsenic.

Larry Kovar from General Activation Analysis, one of the only labs in the world that does commercial neutron activation outside of a university, had this to say about arsenic levels in hair.

For your information, my hair has about 3 ppm Arsenic - the last time I tested it (I'm still alive, I hope) If you send samples to a lab, send some of your own as a control.

This squarely puts the 2.6 ppm reported for Srila Prabhupada, and the poison theory in general as expounded by Nityananda, firmly where it belongs; i.e. the 'circular file'. When I mentioned to Larry in a later correspondence about the 3 ppm reported by Nityananda Das, he had the following to say.

Not sure where the As came from - 3 ppm could be "normal" and not from an external source.

When I asked about retesting the hair that was tested by Dr Morris, Larry had this to say.

A low (less than 10 ppm) value shows the hair is "normal." A high value (greater than 10 ppm) indicates Arsenic exposure. Since the hair has been tested at 3 ppm As, I feel a re-test is not necessary... I have discussed this with Dr Vince Guinn, a well-known researcher in this field, and he agrees.

After Larry found that his facility didn't have the required reactor time to perform the tests, he contacted Dr. Richard Cashwell at the University of Wisconsin about performing the analysis. Dr Cashwell wrote back with the following information regarding his own experience with neutron activation analysis for hair arsenic.

We ran a series of As in hair determinations years ago; the highest "normal" sample we saw was 12 ppm- from a physics graduate student from Scotland. I'd agree with your normal range.

What this means is that trained professional scientists who are working in this very specialized field of neutron activation analysis for hair arsenic content, all confer that any value up to 10 ppm arsenic can be considered to be "normal" levels. Therefore we are left to either believe these experts, and all of the other scientists and doctors quoted above, or Nityananda Das who has no experience or background in this field whatsoever.

Conclusion

Based on the documented evidence, there are absolutely NO GROUNDS to claim that the 2.6 ppm arsenic level for Srila Prabhupada's

hair is a clear indicator of poisoning. Hair can absorb arsenic from any number of possible external sources, thus raising the apparent concentration of arsenic. Therefore no forensic pathologist will return a finding of poisoning based on hair analysis alone, without specific clinical symptoms of arsenicosis.

Even if external contamination could be ruled out (which it clearly cannot in this case), the figure of 2.6 ppm is not high enough to warrant suspicion. Studies have shown average hair concentrations of up to 4.8 ppm in city populations unexposed to arsenic, and a report of 15 different studies by the Toxicology Dept. at MIT Cambridge gives a range of average values for normal (healthy) individuals as being 0.13 - 3.71 ppm arsenic.

So far we have demonstrated that there is no medical evidence in terms of specific symptoms for arsenic poisoning of Prabhupada and that he displayed all the classic clinical signs of diabetic nephropathy (kidney failure). This diagnosis was confirmed by the surgeon who operated on Prabhupada in his final days and by numerous Ayurvedic physicians. The present paper explains why the figure of 2.6 ppm arsenic in Prabhupada's hair is not indicative of poisoning.

This now leaves the entire poison theory edifice resting on the slender thread of a few whispers, which have been interpreted variously, and the apparently "clear" messages heard when conversations of 1977 are played backwards on a tape recorder.

Considering the lack of any evidence of substance, it is hoped that it is only a matter of time until the entire issue is put to rest and we can all get back to doing what Prabhupada wanted us to do, i.e. giving Krishna consciousness to so many suffering in complete forgetfulness of their eternal relationship with Krishna.

In conclusion, there is absolutely no information, either factual or scientific which can support the theory of the chronic arsenic poisoning of Srila Prabhupada.

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7

PRABHUPADA'S SURGEON CONFIRMS: DIABETES TO BLAME

*Report by David R. Hooper B.Sc.
(biochem.) (Deva Gaura Hari Das)*

After being encouraged to further investigate the allegations of arsenic poisoning by Nityananda Das and others, it was decided that we should try and contact the doctor who performed the operation on Srila Prabhupada in England, just over two months before his passing. As one of the only Western health professionals to treat Prabhupada in his final year, and the only doctor who personally performed an operation on His Divine Grace, the testimony of this doctor would certainly be very important to determine the validity of the claims of arsenicosis.

Although previous efforts to try and find this doctor had proved unsuccessful, after inquiries with the College of Surgeons we were given the name of a general surgeon by the name of Andrew McIrvine. Many calls later, we finally traced the doctor and obtained his mobile phone number. Without delay we dialed the number and explained our situation. When Doctor McIrvine heard that we wanted details of an operation he performed 20 years ago, his immediate reply was that it would be very difficult, as he had performed thousands of operations over the years.

However, as soon as we mentioned Srila Prabhupada's name he immediately remembered the case, saying it was such a special case that he could never forget it. He spontaneously remembered how Srila Prabhupada was the Hare Krishna leader, that he was "amazingly calm and stoical", and also the fact that he visited Prabhupada at the manor the day after the operation.

He agreed to send a statement noting down the important facts that he remembered from Srila Prabhupada's condition at the time, and this letter is included in its entirety at the bottom of this page.

Before giving his statement, it is pertinent to give a little background to this topic, and also to discuss the consequences of the doctor's statement

on the medical claims made by Nityananda Das in his book ‘Someone Has Poisoned Me’ (SHPM).

In our previous papers on the VNN and Chakra web sites, we have focused on how the overwhelming mass of scientific and medical evidence supports the diagnosis that Srila Prabhupada was suffering from advanced diabetes which led to serious kidney damage, loss of appetite and related systemic complications.

In SHPM (Appendix 7), Nityananda Das tries to discount the diagnosis of diabetes, in an attempt to attribute all of Srila Prabhupada’s symptoms to his theory of arsenic poisoning. On page 350 he makes the following claims:

Srila Prabhupada did not have diabetes serious enough to display the symptoms of diabetes. For example, loss of vision or blindness is sometimes seen in diabetes. Srila Prabhupada, however, did not exhibit the signs of an advanced case of diabetes, which would produce loss of vision. Further, not one doctor or kaviraja even mentioned diabetes as a factor in His Divine Grace’s health, nor did he require insulin. Diabetes is thus ruled.

Nityananda Das, SHPM. Page 350.

“When deteriorating eyesight made it impossible for Prabhupada to translate, he called for Bhakti Caitanya Swami and Trivikrama Swami, who had been asked to come to Vrindavan.” — Symptoms of diabetes?

As we will see below, Srila Prabhupada did in fact display the symptoms of diabetes, so much so that the doctor, who treated him only 9 weeks before his passing, immediately diagnosed diabetes as soon as he saw Prabhupada, and confirmed his diagnosis by blood and urine tests. So much for no symptoms. As for blindness, Prabhupada’s deteriorating eyesight was clearly documented by Tamal Krishna Goswami in TKG’s diary:

When deteriorating eyesight made it impossible for Prabhupada to translate, he called for Bhakti Caitanya Swami and Trivikrama Swami, who had been asked to come to Vrindavana. June 30, 1977. When Srila Prabhupada signed the will amendment, his deteriorating eyesight made it difficult for him to see the document he was signing. November 9, 1977.

Amazingly, Nityananda Das, after convincing the reader that loss of vision (as a symptom of diabetes) was not present, explains that loss of vision (as a symptom of arsenicosis) was present. Not only that, but it now miraculously appears as a symptom “unique” to arsenic poisoning:

Symptoms Unique to Arsenic Poisoning And Not to Kidney Diseases. A LOSS OF VISION due to brain damage or optic nerve damage.

Nityananda Das, SHPM (page 68)

In 'Nityananda's Diagnosis 1' we stated that the impartial reader should regard Nityananda Das's claims with caution due to his lack of academic qualifications and one-sided representation of the scientific literature. In light of the above example (and others like it), we would now go so far as to seriously question whether much of his reasoning is even logically coherent, what to speak of approaching the rigorous standards of a scientific or medical research text.

"Srila Prabhupada first presented to me in the emergency room of Watford General Hospital in 1977. He was in obviously poor health and showed signs of renal failure and was found to be diabetic."

— ANDREW McIRVINE

Performed operation on Prabhupada in Watford

The claim that Srila Prabhupada did not have diabetes because he didn't require insulin also shows either accidental or intentional ignorance of the literature.

Prabhupada was clearly suffering from diabetes type 2, which is also known as non-insulin-dependant diabetes. From Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine (p. 2065), which is listed in SHPM's list of references, we learn that insulin-dependant diabetes (type 1) most commonly begins in the teenage years and is caused by a complete inability to produce insulin. Without insulin shots the patient would quickly die. In contrast, non-insulin-dependant diabetes (type 2) usually begins in middle life or later, with symptoms appearing gradually. It results not from a lack of insulin, but rather the body's inability to properly process insulin, and is often treated by a controlled diet and exercise.

Therefore it is patently untrue to say that Prabhupada couldn't have had diabetes because he didn't require insulin.

As for Nityananda Das's claim that "not one doctor or kavi-rajā even mentioned diabetes as a factor in His Divine Grace's health", we will let Doctor McIrvine's statement speak for itself. After due consideration of the above points, we will leave it to the reader to decide how much credence we should put in Nityananda Das's conclusion that, "Diabetes is thus ruled."

The statement from Doctor Andrew McIrvine, who performed the operation on Srila Prabhupada at Watford General Hospital on September 8th, 1977 reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Hooper,

Thank you for the message, as I said on the 'phone I do remember the case well, even though it was a long time ago. Srila Prabhupada first presented to me in the emergency room of Watford General Hospital in 1977. He was in obviously poor health and showed signs of renal failure and was found to be diabetic. These diagnoses were made on clinical suspicion confirmed by blood and urine analysis. His most obvious problem on admission was urinary retention. This was caused by a most unusual degree of phimosis. That is a long-standing scarring and thickening of the foreskin such that he was by the time of his admission virtually unable to pass urine. This process would have taken many years to develop and during that time could well have produced backpressure enough to result in renal problems - as more often happens with prostatic obstruction. I remember him as an amazingly calm and stoical person. He refused to be admitted to hospital and I am sure he would not have withstood a general anaesthetic.

Somehow we persuaded him to have a circumcision to relieve the problem, which I carried out in the ER under local anaesthetic. He made a good recovery from this and was able to pass urine normally following the procedure. Unfortunately his renal failure was by that time well advanced and irreversible, caused by a combination of diabetes and phimosis. I hope this is of some help.

My best wishes,

Andrew J McIrvine FRCS Consultant Surgeon

8

NITYANANDA'S DIAGNOSIS: CARDIAC SYMPTOMS

[This conspiracy theory book by ex-ISKCON member Nityananda dasa alleges that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned —Editor]

***By David R. Hooper B. Sc. (biochem.)
(Deva Gaura Hari Das)***

Introduction

In 'No Medical Evidence for Poisoning of Srila Prabhupada,' a general overview of the symptoms of arsenicosis was given, and their marked absence in the condition of Srila Prabhupada discussed. Also presented was evidence from medical and scientific publications detailing the clear presence of signs and symptoms of diabetes mellitus type 2 with accompanying kidney disease in Prabhupada's physical condition.

This document is the first in a series that will address more directly the claims published in the book 'Someone Has Poisoned Me,' (hereafter referred to as SHPM), by Nityananda Das. We will begin by examining each of the 'symptoms' given in the Health Biography Analysis (chapter 32, page 226) of SHPM.

Cardiac:

Arsenic caused Srila Prabhupada's heart to palpitate, quicken its beat, and become irregular in its beat, all noted in the health biography. - SHPM

Cardiac Symptoms - Arsenical or Diabetic?

The two major types of arsenic poisoning are acute (appearance of symptoms within hours of a large oral dose) and chronic (gradual onset of symptoms over several weeks following repeated small doses or environmental exposure). It is important to note that the clinical signs of the two types of arsenic intoxication are quite different. We carried out extensive research into more than 50 medical publications, including most of the 24

medical references cited in SHPM. With few exceptions, the references to arsenic-induced cardiac irregularities, especially ventricular dysrhythmia, relate to acute rather than chronic poisoning. Goldfrank's *Toxicologic Emergencies* gives the typical account of acute intoxication:

Acute toxicity typically begins with gastrointestinal symptoms of nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhea ... Cardiovascular instability often accompanies or quickly follows these symptoms ... Patients with severe poisoning may also develop acute encephalopathy with delirium, seizures, coma, dysrhythmias, fever ... acute renal failure, and death.¹

The symptoms of chronic poisoning are also commonly agreed on as being; a progressive symmetrical polyneuropathy (gradual loss of feeling, pins and needles in both legs beginning with the feet), dermatological features (scaly rash, dappling of trunk, thickening of palms and soles), Mees lines (white lines of arsenic deposited in fingernails), nausea and general weakness.^{2,3,12,13}

Therefore, the overwhelming experience of experts is that while cardiac effects are often seen in cases of acute intoxication, in chronic poisoning cardiovascular symptoms are far less noticeable, and are extremely unlikely to be seen in the absence of the other more prominent neurological and dermatological symptoms of arsenic intoxication.

Nityananda Das's hypothesis is that Srila Prabhupada was given small doses of arsenic over a long period, thus producing symptoms of chronic, rather than acute poisoning. It is therefore inconsistent with the literature to attribute Prabhupada's cardiac disturbances to chronic arsenicism, in the absence of the other symptoms such as symmetrical polyneuropathy, dermatological changes and nail bed irregularities.

While the literature doesn't support a diagnosis of chronic arsenical cardiac complications without dermatological or neurological signs, there is abundant literature linking diabetes with cardiovascular disease, especially heart attack and stroke.

Coronary artery disease is the most common cause of death in adults with diabetes mellitus. Diabetes mellitus is an independent risk factor for coronary artery disease, and the incidence of coronary artery disease is related to the duration of diabetes.⁴

As discussed in the previous paper, it was common knowledge within ISKCON since 1969 that Prabhupada was a diabetic. He confirmed this fact himself and Dr. McIrving who treated Prabhupada at Watford Peace Memorial Hospital in 1977 also gave the same diagnosis.

The following points about diabetic coronary heart disease are also interesting to note.

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the leading cause of diabetes-related death; adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to die from CHD as their non-diabetic counterparts.⁶

Coronary artery disease and stroke are quite common. Silent myocardial infarction occurs with increased frequency in diabetes and should be suspected whenever symptoms of left ventricular failure appear suddenly. Diabetes may also be associated with the clinical picture of cardiomyopathy, in which heart failure occurs in the face of apparently normal coronary arteries and in the absence of other identifiable causes of heart disease.⁴

That Srila Prabhupada lived an extremely pure life, never smoked or took alcohol, nor had any other identifiable causes of heart disease is yet another indication that his diabetes was the cause of his repeated heart attacks and stroke.

Prabhupada confirmed the fact that such diabetic heart attacks are generally severe and life threatening, citing his own experience.

He had said that when the heart attack had come, it had been meant for his death; therefore he had called out loudly, "Hare Krishna!" thinking that the moment of death had come.⁷

May, 1967.

To say that Srila Prabhupada's heart problems of 1977 were due to arsenic neglects to acknowledge the fact that he had displayed these clinical signs for at least ten years prior to this (refer to cardiac health history below). In fact, details of his symptoms recorded independently in 1967 and 1977 display a remarkable similarity in describing his condition.

During the last week of May, Srila Prabhupada began to feel exhausted. He spoke of heart palpitations. Hoping that the symptoms would clear up in a day or two, Kirtanananda requested Prabhupada to rest and see no visitors. But Prabhupada's condition became worse.⁷

May, 1967.

Working on Srimad-Bhagavatam, he was completely transcendental to his physical condition, despite the accompanying heart palpitations and despite his faint voice and general weakness. Even to sit was difficult, and yet once he began working, nothing could stop him.⁷

July, 1977.

Therefore, to say that chronic arsenicosis was the cause of Srila Prabhupada's heart palpitations and other cardiovascular problems of 1977 is to disregard both the available medical literature and the clear historical facts of identical symptoms recorded since 1965. Rather, the

cardiac traumas experienced by Srila Prabhupada from 1965 through to 1977 are clearly attributable to diabetes mellitus, which had gone untreated for many years, if not decades.

History of Cardiac Symptoms 1967-1977

In 1965, before Prabhupada had set foot on American soil, he suffered two heart attacks on the ship taking him to the United States. Again in 1967 he suffered a major heart attack and stroke that paralyzed the left side of his body and took two years for him to recover from. Throughout the years to come, Prabhupada experienced heart problems on and off with palpitations and weakness of the heart reported throughout the early seventies up to the year of his passing in 1977. The following is a partial record of Srila Prabhupada's history of cardiac illness from 1965 through to 1977.

Srila Prabhupada wrote of some sea-sickness, and on the thirteenth day of the voyage, during the passage through the Arabian Sea, he suffered a massive heart attack. ⁹ **[August 1965]**

The devotees called a second doctor, who came and diagnosed Srila Prabhupada as having had a mild heart attack. He said that Prabhupada should at once go to the hospital. ⁷ **[May, 1967]**

Prabhupada: In '68 I was alone. And I had to struggle very, very hard, alone. Therefore I got heart attack in 1967. Then that heart attack and regress continued for two years. Whatever is done, it is done from 1969. Before that, I was simply alone struggling to start this mission. ¹¹ **[April 10, 1977. (ref. May, 1967-69)]**

Srila Prabhupada's brief description of the personal ordeal he had passed through left me listless. Prabhupada had been nearly unconscious for many days. I remembered in India seeing him in a similar condition due to over-exhaustion, but Prabhupada had passed through that trial quickly, recovering in one night. And I recalled how in Los Angeles he had suffered from heart palpitations and severe coughing which plagued him for nearly a month. ¹⁰ **[September, 1974]**

The nights had been passing with difficulty for Prabhupada. He had been unable to translate because the strain of talking caused heart palpitations. His sleeping had also been interrupted by the palpitations. ⁸ **[May 25, 1977]**

Last night he had difficulty on account of heart pain. ⁸ **[June 20, 1977]**

Working on Srimad-Bhagavatam, he was completely transcendental to his physical condition, despite the accompanying heart palpitations and despite his faint voice and general weakness. Even to sit was difficult, and yet once he began working, nothing could stop him. ⁷ **[July, 1977]**

Prabhupada made an opening and closing motion with his hand, indicating he was having heart palpitations. They were worse, he explained, than before in Vrindavana. ⁸ **[September 10, 1977]**

Discussion

Attributing the 1977 cardiac symptoms to arsenicosis brings up some other interesting questions:

Is Nityananda Das suggesting that the heart attacks that happened prior to Prabhupada's coming to America were also due to arsenic poisoning?

What about the palpitations and attacks in 1967, why would neophyte disciples want to poison their newfound spiritual master they were so dependent on?

If Nityananda Das accepts that these clinical manifestations were simply due to Srila Prabhupada's own systemic illness, then why attribute the same symptoms to arsenicosis when they reappear ten years later?

Rather than advance into the realms of medical conjecture, the obvious diagnosis is to simply attribute the heart attacks and palpitations to long untreated diabetes. The doctor who personally treated Prabhupada confirmed this prognosis, and it is supported by all available literature. There is clearly no need to look to some extraneous cause for the cardiac symptoms of 1977, when Prabhupada's health had further deteriorated and he was more prone to be affected by these cardiac weaknesses.

The argument may be raised that the cardiac symptoms are just one of many clinical features that point to arsenic poisoning. However, we shouldn't let this smokescreen get in the way of an unbiased appraisal of each particular symptom with reference to the medical history of the patient and current literature. As we progress to question each symptoms validity, it may well be found that there are actually very few, if any, specific signs and symptoms of arsenic poisoning in the health history of Srila Prabhupada.

Conclusion

The diagnosis of arsenical cardiomyopathy, in the absence of all the major indicative signs of chronic exposure such as polyneuropathy, skin thickening and pigmentation, nail lines etc. cannot at all be supported by the medical literature. The fact that Nityananda Das is neither a medical doctor responsible to a professional board or research scientist answer-

able to a university faculty allows him to make such claims with relative immunity, at least from a professional standpoint. However, the impartial reader would be well advised to regard such claims with caution in light of Nityananda Das's lack of academic credentials and questionable ability to impartially represent the available medical literature.

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9

A STATEMENT FROM TAMAL KRSNA GOSWAMI

Dear Readers,

Please accept my most humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

For quite some time rumors have been circulating that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned, murdered by his own disciples. I as his secretary have been the chief accused. Many of you might have wondered why I have not denied this charge if there is no truth to it. The reason is quite simple: I felt the most appropriate and beneficial way to do so was to publish my diary, "TKG's Diary," both in book form and electronically in the Supplementary VedaBase.

This allows everyone the chance to judge for themselves what went on during Prabhupada's final pastimes. I also did not want to be drawn into endless debate with persons who are not actually interested in hearing facts that contradict their spurious theories. Still, friends have urged me to at least make one statement, and having read HH Bhakti Caru Swami's, I now am doing the same. It is not meant to be a comprehensive response to each and every allegation but a simple statement of fact.

*I DID NOT POISON PRABHUPADA. In fact, NOBODY
POISONED PRABHUPADA.*

There were many dozens of devotees surrounding Srila Prabhupada in his final pastimes. Their only concern was to see Srila Prabhupada continue to live with us. Especially those serving him personally were attentive to detail and every word His Divine Grace spoke. Do you think that we could be so callous as to have heard Prabhupada say "I have been poisoned," and not be concerned? Of course we were concerned. We discussed the matter with Prabhupada and among ourselves, as anyone can read in "TKG's Diary." We did not go searching for a murderer because we concluded there was no murder.

Some have suggested that even if no one intentionally poisoned Prabhupada, the medicine he was given acted as "poison." I can well

imagine some will hold me responsible as Prabhupada's secretary for giving him this medicine.

But I was not engaged, nor were any of his servants, because of our expertise in medical knowledge. All of us together did not even know one percent of what Prabhupada knew of Ayurvedic medicine. It was His Divine Grace who had a dream about a Kaviraja preparing a particular medicine, and it was His Divine Grace who reviewed each and every type of medicine that he was administered.

Still, no medicine "killed" Srila Prabhupada. His Divine Grace said that Krishna had given him the decision whether to stay or not. It is most unfair to say that any one of us who were serving him was praying for his untimely departure (what to speak of orchestrating it). Again and again we begged Prabhupada to stay with us, even offered our life in exchange for his, as any good disciple would do. Prabhupada repeatedly said that he was living simply due to our love and affection. He said that his Guru Maharaja passed away dissatisfied, but that he was completely satisfied. No one, he said, could ever hope to have such loving sons and daughters as he had. He left us because he chose to leave. He left because Krishna called him back.

That is the plain truth and anything else is a concoction.

Prabhupada's servants dedicated the better part of their lives to serving Srila Prabhupada. We served him during his manifest pastimes right up until the end. It was not easy to serve His Divine Grace during the last year of his failing health. It was not easy to see his body wither, his resolve to continue on, wane. By his mercy alone we stayed by him throughout this difficult time and performed every possible service, collecting his urine, removing his stool, bathing him, changing his clothes and bedding, but most of all encouraging him to continue on. It has come as a most cruel blow to be suspected of having been moved by any other motive than love in serving our dear most spiritual master.

The facts will speak for themselves. In the coming days and months all the allegations of poisoning will be shown to be allegations and nothing more.

Then I hope that those who have falsely accused me and others will have the decency to admit that they were wrong and beg forgiveness, not from us, but from Srila Prabhupada, whose sublime final pastimes they have attempted to tarnish.

Begging to always be a servant of the Vaisnavas,
Tamal Krishna Goswami

10

A STATEMENT FROM BHAVANANDA DASA

A statement - one statement only - for the record

By Bhavananda dasa

To all the devotees of ISKCON

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

I have been most apprehensive about becoming involved in what I saw to be an “endless debate” on the Internet over the poison issue, but then Hari Sauri prabhu made the point that many innocent devotees were becoming bewildered by all this. I therefore felt duty bound to make a statement - and one statement only - for the record.

I did not poison Srila Prabhupada nor was I involved in a conspiracy to poison Srila Prabhupada. Absolutely none of my Godbrothers poisoned Srila Prabhupada. The entire poison issue is ludicrous and beyond absurd.

Anyone who was present in Vrindavana at that time could not deny that every attempt both material and spiritual was made in an effort to keep Srila Prabhupada with us all as long as possible. Srila Prabhupada departed by his own sweet will and by the desire of his beloved Lords, Krsna and Balarama.

Those were extremely difficult times not only for those of us who were nursing him but also for all his disciples around the world. I don't know where Nityananda dasa was at that time but his assistance in caring for Srila Prabhupada would have been greatly appreciated by his Godbrothers.

Srila Prabhupada was certainly never more approachable by all the devotees regardless of sannyasa, grhastha, male, female or even child. I remember thinking Srila Prabhupada would want some privacy from the video camera of Yadubara prabhu but he told me Yadubara should be allowed to film whatever he wanted. So you can understand that an atmosphere of openness prevailed, not one of secrecy and whispers as the real poison conspirators are implying.

doubtless there is much work to be done for Srila Prabhupada to save the conditioned souls from the horrendous onslaught of maya. Let us all at least put this particular lunacy to rest to allow us to get on with the serious work at hand.

I remain the most lowly and unqualified servant of all the Vaisnavas of ISKCON.

Bhavananda dasa.

11

A STATEMENT FROM TRIVIKRAMA SWAMI

I was also present in those last few months in Vrndaban with Srila Prabhupada. We were spending 3 or 4 hours a day in his room doing kirtan.

For me it is unimaginable that anyone of Srila Prabhupada's personal servant could have even ONCE entertained the thought of poisoning Srila Prabhupada. Absolutely unimaginable!!

To suggest, as Nityananda has done that there was not just one who had this thought, but a conspiracy of a number of his servants, who not only thought about it but actually carried it out, is so far beyond the pale of believability, that I like Bhakta Caru Maharaj, have not thought it necessary to involve myself in defending against this absurd allegation.

In those days I was not acting in the capacity of a personal servant, perhaps that is why my name has not been raised in this allegation. I was however speaking personally, with Srila Prabhupada on many occasions. He knew very well that I was independent minded. Once he told me, "I know that you can't work with your GBC man, so you can work directly for me". There were many other independently thoughtful devotees also present who Srila Prabhupada could have called if he really thought that some of his servants were conspiring to poison him.

I do remember one incident that may help shed light on this affair. Satsvarupa Maharaj had just arrived, perhaps a few weeks before Srila Prabhupada left. He was mentioning how he had invited all the leading devotees in his zone to come to be with Srila Prabhupada in those, what turned out to be, final days. He told us how when he had suggested that Nityananda might also visit Vrndaban to be with his spiritual master, as Srila Prabhupada was requesting all his disciples to come. Nityananda responded by saying, "What do I want to go there for!!" in an off handed way. Satsvarupa explained that he was surprised, and offended, that Nityananda was so callous to Srila Prabhupada's plea.

Your servant
Trivikram Swami

12

JAYADVAITA SWAMI ON POISON THEORY:

As much as I dislike feeling obliged to respond to garbage, I think that I too ought to comment on the scuttlebutt that Srila Prabhupada, by a conspiracy of disciples, was poisoned.

I was present in Vrindaban in the last weeks of Srila Prabhupada's physical presence. Much of that time I spent with Srila Prabhupada in his own room.

I saw how Srila Prabhupada dealt with the devotees caring for him, and how they dealt with him. Sometimes I was with Srila Prabhupada alone, reading to him late at night. More often I was with Srila Prabhupada as he lay surrounded by his devotees.

I saw the sublime and profound and inspiring. And sometimes the foolish, the egotistical, the petty. Somehow, by the grace of Krsna, I had the good fortune to observe and sometimes take part in Srila Prabhupada's final days on earth.

It pains me, therefore, when I hear those deep, multi-faceted, and precious times reduced to the level of tabloid journalism and pulp fiction. It pains me when those I saw serving His Divine Grace with extraordinary devotion and love are made out to be devious killers. It pains me that now, when we ought to be drinking the nectar of Krsna that Srila Prabhupada came to let us share, Maya has us gnawing instead on the poison of theories about poison.

I've read the transcripts and listened to the enhanced audiotapes that supposedly reveal it all. I've had the Hindi explained to me word by word by a native Hindi speaker. I've listened patiently to the arguments mapped out for me by close friends who believe it's all true.

And nothing they've shown or told me has even begun to persuade me that what took place in Vrindaban was something other than what I directly heard and felt and saw—Krsna's beloved pure devotee spending his final days in this world under the tender, loving, and affectionate care of his own beloved disciples.

Thank you. Hare Krsna.
Your servant,
Jayadvaita Swami

13

LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

By His Holiness Bhakti Caru Swami

Recently one of our god-brothers, Nityananda dasa adhikari, wrote a book called, “Someone has Poisoned Me” and alleged that the cause of Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance from this planet is arsenic poisoning, and the ones who were serving His Divine Grace at that time administered him that poison.

Since I was one of Srila Prabhupada’s personal servants at that time, taking care of his food and medicines, according to that book, I am naturally a suspect. When I first heard about this allegation I considered it to be so absurd that I did not think it deserved any response. I could not even imagine that anyone with a rational mind would give any credence to such an allegation. However, yesterday I received a com message from Hari Sauri prabhu, one of Srila Prabhupada’s personal servants and the author of “The Transcendental Diary”, saying, “The (poison) issue must be dealt with directly. That must include direct statements from yourself (Tamal Krsna Goswami), Bhakti Caru, Bhavananda, Jayapataka et. al. When the persons that were there present their experiences collectively it makes a very powerful statement. I want to repeat, it MUST be done.”

Therefore, I felt somewhat compelled to write this statement.

Just in case you do not know me and wondering why Hari Sauri Prabhu is asking me to address this issue, I will give a brief introduction about myself - I am one of the last disciples of Srila Prabhupada. I met His Divine Grace in January of 1977. In March, during the Gaura-Purnima Festival, in Mayapur, he gave me first and second initiations. He personally appointed me as his secretary for Indian affairs. Once he instructed me not to get involved with any woman and offer this life completely to Krsna, and soon after that, in May, he gave me sannyasa in Sridham Vrindavan. I had the good fortune to serve His Divine Grace’s transcendental body until his disappearance pastime from this planet.

From Srila Prabhupada we learnt that a vaisnava does not defend himself. Therefore, in this response to Nityananda dasa’s allegation I will

not try to defend myself, however I feel it is my solemn duty to defend those who are innocent, with my honest testimony.

The author of the book is accusing Tamal Krishna Goswami as the main suspect. I do not know how well Nityananda dasa knows Tamal Krsna Maharaj and how closely he associated with him, but while serving Srila Prabhupada I had the opportunity to associate with him very closely and lived with him in the same room for about seven months. During those days I saw what a deep love and respect he had for Srila Prabhupada, and I also saw what a deep confidence His Divine Grace had in him.

Tamal Krsna Maharaj has a very heavy side but one should not judge him only from that point of view. He has a very soft side as well. Anyone who knows him knows well how aggressive and demanding he can be and to live with him for seven months was not always easy for me, to say the least. Yet I will honestly admit that I have seen his other side also and I have many sweet memories of my days with him. I have received elder brotherly affection and care from him that created a deep bond between us. Although from time to time we experienced our differences yet our relationship remained intact. I decided to mention about this perception of mine because I have seen many a times some devotees carry an inaccurate image of other devotees that obscure their perception.

It is quite interesting to note that although Nityananda dasa wrote one whole book based on some whispers and an incorrect and dubious analysis of some hairs, was nowhere near Srila Prabhupada in those days in Vrindavan. If he was then he would have seen how absurd his suspicion and accusation is.

If he was present then he would have seen, what to speak of poisoning Srila Prabhupada, the devotees around Srila Prabhupada were praying to Krsna to let Srila Prabhupada stay on this planet in exchange of their lives.

It is extremely unfortunate that Nityananda dasa is so obsessed with some whispers, but he is not listening to the exchanges that are so loud and clear. If he was present there then he would have seen that just a couple of days before Srila Prabhupada left this planet he told his very intimate god-brother, Srila Krsnadasa Babaji Maharaj, with tears rolling down from his eyes, "See, how much they love me!"

If he was attending Srila Prabhupada in the early hours in Vrindavan, he would have heard Srila Prabhupada as soon as his Divine Grace woke up, "Where is Tamal? Ask him to come to me." And then he would have seen a very sweet loving exchange between them. Srila Prabhupada talking to him about the affairs of the movement, his various concerns about the future of this movement and what should be done to protect this movement.

If Nityananda dasa was present there then he would have also seen that there were hundreds of devotees whose hearts were so full with their love for Srila Prabhupada that they were prepared to do anything for him.

There were personalities like Gurukripa, who used to attend Srila Prabhupada everyday from 12 midnight to 2 in the morning. If Srila Prabhupada really suspected that someone had poisoned him, then all he had to do is just tell Gurukripa. Anyone who knows Gurukripa knows what would have happened then.

And it is not only Gurukripa, Srila Prabhupada had to just tell any one of the few hundred devotees that were there, and one can only imagine what the reaction would have been like.

Those who are suspecting that Srila Prabhupada has been poisoned by some of his disciples, I will request them to go deep within their hearts and ask whether it is at all possible for a vaisnava, who does not even kill an ant, to murder his spiritual master.

One evening I was with Tamal Krishna Maharaj in our room in Vrindavan. A mosquito was sucking his blood sitting on his leg. It had become quite bloated with the blood that it sucked from his body. A sudden pain from the bite made Tamal Krishna Maharaj aware of that mosquito. His hand rose in a natural reflex to strike that little creature, but stopped all of a sudden, then it came down slowly and flicked the mosquito away from his leg. The person who would not even kill the mosquito that was sucking his blood, how can anyone think that he gave poison to his spiritual master.

Srila Prabhupada went to Vrindavan in May from Hrisikesa to leave his body. Everyone present there was aware of that. The conspiracy to eliminate him was not the reality rather the reality was intense prayer to Krsna not to let Srila Prabhupada go away from their midst.

I personally learnt a wonderful lesson from this allegation. I must have developed some pride due to my good fortune in serving Srila Prabhupada those days. Now Krsna, the destroyer of pride, is mercifully taking care of that.

While I, due to my false ego, was feeling proud that I served Krsna's pure devotee, the world is seeing me as the one who gave him poison. It is indeed Krsna's causeless mercy.

I used to feel very impressed by one statement of Srila Prabodhananda Saraswati, a very intimate associate of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the uncle of Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami, "If the whole world glorifies me but Krsna does not recognize me then what is the use of that glorification. If the whole world spits at me but Krsna recognizes me then who cares about that spitting."

Very mercifully Krsna is giving me the opportunity to apply this wonderful instruction in my own life. This allegation is making me aware about the futility of mundane adoration and importance of Krsna's recognition. No matter what the world thinks, Krsna knows everything. Therefore what is the use of worrying about my image in this world? After all, sitting in my heart Krsna knows about all that I think and do. The condi-

tioned souls of this material world may make mistakes in their judgment, but Krsna will never make any mistake. I have taken shelter of Him and surrendered myself unto Him, now let Him decide what I deserve.

To this world I will declare clear and loudly, "IT IS AN ABSOLUTELY ABSURD ALLEGATION THAT SRILA PRABHUPADA HAS BEEN POISONED BY HIS DISCIPLES. IF ANYONE INTENTIONALLY POISONED SRILA PRABHUPADA, THEN IT MUST BE ME BECAUSE THOSE DAYS I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO USED TO GIVE PRASAD AND MEDICINE TO HIS DIVINE GRACE. WHATEVER HE ATE AND DRANK WENT THROUGH MY HAND."

Let the omniscient, omnipotent Supreme Personality of Godhead judge me. If I committed such a heinous crime towards the most dear devotee of the Lord, to whom I owe everything, including my very existence, then let me suffer eternally in the darkest region of the hell.

If any of Srila Prabhupada's disciples, whose heart is steeped with his love for Srila Prabhupada, wants to take the law in his hand and judge me, I will welcome that also. I give him full freedom to judge and do whatever he wants to do with me. I can assure him that I will accept that judgment without any protest.

If someone wants to take me to the mundane court also, he can do so. There also I will give the same testimony, "IT IS AN ABSOLUTELY ABSURD ALLEGATION THAT SRILA PRABHUPADA HAS BEEN POISONED BY HIS DISCIPLES. IF ANYONE INTENTIONALLY POISONED SRILA PRABHUPADA, THEN IT MUST BE ME BECAUSE THOSE DAYS I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO USED TO GIVE PRASAD AND MEDICINE TO HIS DIVINE GRACE. WHATEVER HE ATE AND DRANK WENT THROUGH MY HAND."

Waiting to receive your judgment and aspiring to remain a servant of the Vaisnavas,

Bhakti Caru Swami.

14

A CHALLENGE TO NITYANANDA DASA

By Ravindra Svarupa dasa, GBC

Nityananda das (Niko Kyut), a Prabhupada initiate expelled a decade ago from ISKCON, is lately the author of a self-published 408-page book - designated, weirdly, on cover and title page as “a letter”—with the title “Someone Has Poisoned Me: The Facts About Srila Prabhupada’s Poisoning By Arsenic.”

In this bloated missive, then, the author purports to demonstrate conclusively that Srila Prabhupada was assassinated by gradual and deliberate arsenic poisoning. He says: “We have sufficient evidence to assuredly and unequivocally state: Srila Prabhupada was poisoned. The mass of corroborating evidence herein establishes this fact as a certainty” (p. 286).

Not only that, the author names and relentlessly indicts the purported chief assassins: Tamal Krishna Goswami, Bhakti Charu Swami, and Jayapataka Swami.

Accusing them of the greatest possible crime, he remorselessly assaults their devotion, their honor, and their reputation. The author pulls all the emotional stops to incite the readers into the frenzy of a lynch mob:

“It does not take a rocket scientist to guess as to what motive someone may have had in poisoning Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada stood between them and something they very much wanted, namely the absolute position, absolute power, tremendous assets, and prestige of taking Srila Prabhupada’s place as leader and virtual owner of ISKCON.” (p. 276)

“Our Divine Guide and Master was poisoned in front of our eyes, and He decided to leave our association. The pure devotee of the Supreme Lord, the ambassador from the spiritual world, was cruelly and horribly tormented with arsenic, a most painful and despicable poison. Srila Prabhupada was frustrated in His mission and we were frustrated in His consequent departure. “Is there any greater crime?” (p. 277)

He instructs us: “The assassins are almost certainly still inside ISKCON in positions of power and leadership. . . . We must of necessity completely purge the saboteurs from ISKCON” (p. 287).

To be sure, the author lays down some pro forma disclaimers. While asserting that Srila Prabhupada was murdered beyond a doubt, while accusing certain leading devotees of this crime of crimes, while advising the world that these very assassins still run ISKCON—while doing all this, he states, with sublimest duplicity, “this publication makes no accusations as to who poisoned Srila Prabhupada” (281). Then, in a move the reader has come to recognize as typical, he immediately proceeds to make the accusations again.

It is clear enough what Nityananda dasa is up to. He is accusing some devotees of a monstrous crime. But I believe that in writing and publishing this book Nityananda dasa has himself committed the monstrous crime. He deludes us—and perhaps himself—when he says that his assertions and accusations are based on credible evidence. In fact, the “evidence” has been carefully selected, artfully tweaked, tendentiously interpreted to yield the preordained desired result.

And he wants those preordained results widely broadcast. He has printed 5,000 copies of his book. In India, certain people, with a political agenda, have profusely distributed this work among ISKCON congregations and have seen to it that Nityananda’s conspiracy theory has been widely echoed in the newspapers.

If Nityananda dasa is wrong, then he has much to answer for.

Recently Bhakti Charu Swami, has responded to Nityananda’s monstrous accusations. Bhakti Charu Swami’s response includes this statement:

“Let the omniscient, omnipotent Supreme Personality of Godhead judge me. If I committed such a heinous crime towards the most dear devotee of the Lord, to whom I owe everything, including my very existence, then let me suffer eternally in the darkest region of the hell.”

Now I accuse Nityananda dasa of a monstrous, heinous crime in making his lying accusations. And I challenge him to take a pledge corresponding to the one by Bhakti Charu Swami.

Let Nityananda dasa match Bhakti Charu Swami’s pledge with his own:

“Let the omniscient, omnipotent Supreme Personality of Godhead judge me. If I committed such a heinous crime of making it falsely appear that Srila Prabhupada had been murdered by his own devotees, and further, of falsely accusing innocent devotees, who actually loved and cared dearly for Srila

Prabhupada, of that crime, then let me suffer eternally in the darkest region of hell.”

Let Nityananda dasa support his own convictions in the same way the Bhakti Charu has supported his. Nityananda dasa may remember that at one time, he sent out a “challenge horse” to the GBC.

Now, here is my challenge to him.

Ravindra Svarupa dasa
Member, Governing Body Commission.

15

Poison Addiction Can Be Harmful to Your Health

(Excerpts from an article posted on Cakra)

By Iksvaku das

Dear poison addicts,

Please accept my humble obeisance's, all glories to Srila Prabhupada. I am writing this because I am concerned about the effects your newly found "truths" are having on the minds of unsuspecting, newly inspired souls.

I just returned to ISKCON after a 6 year bout with maya so please understand how appreciative I am that ISKCON is still here to take shelter of. After being informed by several souls of the poison "evidence" I must say you had me believing it for a while. During that while my poison consciousness blinded me to the real purpose of the movement Srila Prabhupada established for the next 10,000 years and I thought (being the sincere souls you are) you might be interested in hearing what effect these issues had on my mind.

I first heard about the poison issue from a devotee in Phoenix, I think his name was Tarun. He was visiting Dasarath's newly established ISKCON temple in Phoenix. Looking back now I realize that this issue took precedence in my mind over and above Krsna Consciousness. When a soul who has any kind of attachment to Srila Prabhupada first hears about this they think about it when they chant, take prasadam, share association with devotees, and even preach. It becomes your reason for praying, your motive for talking to others, and an open wound when you try to take rest. It's like a big sore that won't go away. Becoming purified of this consciousness by taking up Srila Prabhupada's recipe again I must tell you my realizations.

First you must know: I heard the poison tape, read the poison book, the last order and most of the stuff on VNN and Chakra regarding the issues. I have come to realize some things by Krsna's mercy and I don't know how you couldn't have easily seen this too after all this time you have spent pursuing these issues.

You have made this concocted scandal a more important thing to think about than Krsna, Lord Caitanya or any of their pastimes. Srila Prabhupada did not call this the International Society for Prabhupada Consciousness nor does he want us to be continually meditating on whether he was poisoned or not. We should all be developing pure Krsna Consciousness. Our association should be Krsna katha and nothing else. Why do you want otherwise?

In effect what you are truly saying with your across-the-board statements about the established ISKCON parampara is that no one has become purified, no one has been doing authorized devotional service, and anyone who wants to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON is mistaken in their notion of it being of any service for souls any longer. Why don't you wake up and realize what effect your so called "truths" are having in the minds of souls who know nothing of ISKCON nor Krsna Consciousness, what to speak of Srila Prabhupada and his disciples. If you were looking at ISKCON for the first time through the light of VNN would you consider looking into Krsna Consciousness at all?

Ask yourselves this, "What affect is this (the poison nonsense) having on sincere souls who are getting a book for the first time in their life and looking into spiritual possibilities?" Would you jump into such a burden laden controversy with any hope of making such an endeavor a career if you were they? Would this chanting appear to be a means of becoming purified or more messed up?

With these newly inspired souls in mind I can only think, "you don't care what any one thinks about the process. You don't care if anyone ever takes another one of Srila Prabhupada's books nor if anyone ever continues to keep the standards of Deity worship going the same way Srila Prabhupada started them. What does it matter to you if no one ever steps foot in an ISKCON Temple again. In fact it seems to me that you would probably be quite happy to see the ISKCON movement dissolved into oblivion never to remind you of the path your Spiritual Master mercifully shed his torchlight of knowledge on which you have departed from. Do you chant any more? Can you think of Krsna when you chant? I couldn't as long as I kept thinking about your poison nonsense. Just how developed do you think souls are to be able to swallow your newly found revelations? Can they just give up their spiritual masters cause just because you have. Can they stop serving the organization Srila Prabhupada established because you can't see the purity in any souls?"

My hope is that souls who read all your propaganda or "truths" will still somehow see Krsna through all this although I can't myself see Krsna in the whole book of poison. I guess that's probably my lack of spiritual development because I really know Krsna is everywhere. It just seems like He's been left out. May Srila Prabhupada be glorified, and exalted, not painted as an old, suffering, poisoned, soul who can't help himself – like you have painted him.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS FROM RVC



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MANUAL: by HH Danavir Goswami. The popular, standard guide to recruiting and training new devotees in ISKCON. Congregation devotees also use it. (760 pages, hardcover, stitch binding, 64 pages of illustrations including dozens of original drawings) (\$40)

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“*Fortunate Souls* provides an important spiritual road map helping devotees to assist others on the journey back to Godhead.”

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THIS IS GOD? (Vaisnava Society Journal #1): By HH Danavir Goswami and other ISKCON writers. 70 pages, 8.5 x 11 inches, color covers, excellent graphics, includes an amazing article of Vedic evidence predicting Lord Caitanya; the size of the universe; the author of the Vedas, etc. (\$4)



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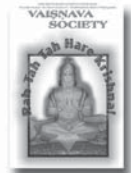
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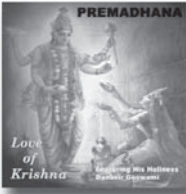
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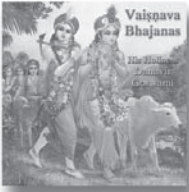
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