

## Abhirama Das

I have only recently become aware of the incredible theories about the so called poisoning of Srila Prabhupada, being circulated by some poorly informed devotees. 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. McIrvine, made a very clear and definitive diagnosis of Srila Prabhupada's condition, namely that he,

- 1) had, due to diabetes (and dropsy) suffered swelling which affected the flow in his urinary tract over many years
- 2) That he had since birth a slightly constricted urethra which further reduced the urinary flow. (This was the reason for surgery and gave a great deal of relief to Srila Prabhupada)
- 3) 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. )
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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.

When Srila Prabhupada first arrived at the hospital, they had refused to treat his urethra constriction unless he was totally hooked up to intravenous feeding and any other life support systems they may need to employ. Srila Prabhupada had warned me many times that he did not want to die in a hospital and I had convinced him to visit on a promise that he would receive only minor surgery to open the urethra ("some minor plumbing work" as I described it to him). I had to use considerably persuasive arguments to convince the surgeon to risk an operation on someone he said was nearly dead, without all the support systems required by hospital policy.

In making my (magnum opus) arguments to the doctor, I pleaded that Srila Prabhupada wanted only enough relief to be able to travel back to his home (Vrindavan) to die as he wished. I challenged the doctors that "if he submits to all of your treatments, how much time can you extend his life?" They answered that he was so far deteriorated at that point they could hardly understand how he was living at all;

and they could not even propose adding three more months to his life with all of their medical interventions employed.

From this point forward I/we knew that the exoteric indications were completely negative. Of course we never stopped hoping against hope that the esoteric reality would alter the future that we all so greatly dreaded.

In time we brought him to Bombay and back to Vrindavan, for what had to become the greatest tragedy of our life and simultaneously another glorious event in his illustrious life; namely his departure. As his nurse I had been instructed by him to "never leave my side day or night" and had spent most days in 24 hour contact with him. I slept holding his hand, I bathed, dressed, fed and carried him. In short, I am a credible witness.

I left his direct physical service under circumstances which may shed additional light on the issue. I have always been very goal driven and able to focus intently on the desired objective, often to an extreme. As his nurse I saw only one acceptable result, and that was improvement of his health and continuation of his life. No other possibility was tenable in my mind. One day in mid October, I noticed some coolies delivering salt bags and a stretcher, to the back porch of Srila Prabhupada's house. As preparations for a funeral at this stage would have been an unthinkable offensive act, I guessed that only Srila

Prabhupada himself could have dared to request it. My inquiries confirmed my suspicions, and it was then that I finally came to terms with the fact the he (Srila Prabhupada) had made an irrevocable decision to leave this world soon. Again, as I had

become a near fanatic to maintain his physical condition, I felt an overwhelming sense of defeat, hopelessness and could not adjust to this new paradigm (due to spiritual immaturity). I therefore asked Srila Prabhupada, if I could be relieved of my duties, in favor of Satadanya and Bhavananda who were by now fully attending to him with equal or greater skill.

My assessment related to the accusations of Srila Prabhupada being poisoned are:

- 1) Srila Prabhupada's exoteric conditions were carefully observed by a variety of care givers and medical professionals.
- 2) All diagnosis generally confirmed that his body was in an overall crisis, precipitated by his diabetes, dropsy, kidney damage, and overstressed due to age, travel, etc.
- 3) His prognosis was not optimistic and death seemed imminent, at least from September 1977.
- 4) There was no indications of any other cause of his ill health (i.e. poisoning) noticed by me or any medical professional up to 16 October 1977 and Srila Prabhupada did not say anything to indicate that he suspected such a thing during my time with him.
- 5) 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.

I have written these details for the first time to benefit those who wish to know them. I have no ulterior motive and pray that my effort will be pleasing to the Vaisnavas and help to maintain a truthful historical perspective on Srila Prabhupada's departure.

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