

Does Srila Prabhupada Support Poisoning Theory?

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The purpose of this paper is to study the actual words of Srila Prabhupada only on the subject of his poisoning. Naturally, we can only rely on the actual words Srila Prabhupada spoke on this issue to determine whether he himself believed that he was deliberately poisoned. Thus the views and opinions of others who were in the room with Srila Prabhupada are of no relevance to us. Neither do we need to consider other subjects Srila Prabhupada discussed that were not directly to do with the issue of his poisoning.

We must stress that this paper does not prove, nor even attempt to prove, that Srila Prabhupada was not poisoned. Nor are we saying that the issue should not be investigated. The GBC themselves felt the available evidence was sufficient grounds on which to launch a detailed investigation. We fully support such an investigation. Our only point here is that we must deal with facts rather than feelings brought on, quite understandably, by this highly charged subject. Thus we shall carefully look at what Srila Prabhupada himself said, rather than what feelings or suspicions his words might invoke in devotees minds and hearts.

Please note, there are in fact only 4 separate exchanges where Srila Prabhupada himself discusses the subject of his poisoning.

The first 3 of these take place at different points in the same conversation, on the 9th of November, and the last exchange takes place the next day on the 10th November. (Note: The above chronology is taken from the book 'Someone Has Poisoned Me'. The folio actually has all 4 exchanges taking place in the same conversation on the 8th November.) 3 out of the 4 exchanges involve Srila Prabhupada speaking in Hindi and Bengali. For the relevant Hindi and Bengali translations we will use those supplied by His Grace Naveen Krishna prabhu in the book 'Someone Has Poisoned Me'. We will refer to each of these exchanges as Exchange 1,2 etc., with the appropriate translation from the book given directly underneath the transliteration in Hindi or Bengali.

Exchange 1

Mixture of English, Hindi and Bengali (9/11/77)

Srila Prabhupada: Keu bole je keu poison kore diyeche. Hoy to tai.

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

Balaram Mishra (?): Hmm?

Kaviraja: Kya farma rahe hain?

Translation: What is he saying?

Srila Prabhupada: Koi bolta hai je koi mujhko poison kiya gaya hai.

Translation: Someone says that someone has given poison.

Kaviraja: Kisko?

Translation: To whom?

Srila Prabhupada: Mujhko.

Translation: To me.

Kaviraja: Kaun bolta hai?

Translation: Who said?

Srila Prabhupada: Ye sab friends.

Translation: These all friends.

Bhakticharu: Ke boleche, Srila Prabhupada?

Translation: Who said, Srila Prabhupada?

Srila Prabhupada: Ke boleche.

Translation: They all say.

Tamal Krishna: Krishna das?

Kaviraja: Ao ko kaun poison dega? Kis liye dega?

Translation: Who would give you poison? Why would anyone do that?

Tamal Krishna: Who said that, Srila Prabhupada?

Srila Prabhupada: I do not know, but it is said.

Conclusion

1. Srila Prabhupada refers to others stating that he has been given poison. Srila Prabhupada does not himself confirm this, only adding that 'It's possible'.

2. At no point does Srila Prabhupada himself state that he has been given poison - he only reports the words of someone else.

Thus exchange 1 does not yield any evidence from the lotus mouth of the acharya himself agreeing that he has been poisoned.

Exchange 2

- Hindi Only (9/11/77)

Kaviraja: Yah, maharaj ji, kotha ap kaise bola aj ki apko koi bola hai ki apko poison diya hai. Ap ko kuch abhas hua hai, kya?

Translation: Maharaj, how did you say this, that someone has said that someone has poisoned you? Have you felt something?

Srila Prabhupada: Nahin, aise koi bola je. debe-sa hi ja hota hai. Shayad koi kitab men likha hai.

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

Exchange 3

- English Only (9/11/77)

Tamal Krishna: Srila Prabhupada? You said before that you. that it is said that you were poisoned?:

Srila Prabhupada: No. These kind of symptoms are seen when a man is poisoned. He said like that, not that I am poisoned.

Tamal Krishna: Did anyone tell you that, or you just know it from before?

Srila Prabhupada: I read something.

Conclusion

We have put these exchanges together because Srila Prabhupada simply repeats to Tamala Krishna in English what he has just told the Kaviraja in Hindi. Here Srila Prabhupada clarifies the fact that the statement by others regarding his poisoning was not even a direct statement that he has been poisoned; but only that he showed the symptoms of poisoning, and that that this was something which is written in a book, and that Srila Prabhupada had himself read such things.

Thus this exchange, as well as yielding no evidence from the mouth of the acharya himself agreeing that he has been poisoned, states that the other sources are not even themselves stating that Srila Prabhupada himself has been directly poisoned.

Summary of the Conversation

These 3 exchanges all take place on the same day.

- a) Srila Prabhupada himself never refers to himself being poisoned.
- b) Srila Prabhupada brings up the issue of 'someone' having 'poisoned' him as having being put forward by someone else, and continues to refer to it simply as someone else's idea - an idea he only stated is 'possible'.
- c) He further clarifies that this 3rd party is only saying that symptoms of poisoning are being displayed - not even that he was poisoned. Srila Prabhupada further confirms that he himself has read this.

Thus we still have no evidence from the acharya himself, where he states that someone has given him poison. Please note therefore that there has been a discussion and talk on the topic of Srila Prabhupada being poisoned by someone:

"Someone says that I've been poisoned. It's possible. [.] Someone says that someone has given poison."

(Srila Prabhupada, Exchange 1)

These were the phrases that started the whole discussion off - Srila Prabhupada is stating that someone else is saying that effectively 'someone has poisoned me'.

This is the context to the final exchange that takes place the next day.

Exchange 4

- Mixture of English, Hindi and Bengali (10/11/77)

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

Bhakticharu: Srila Prabhupada?

Srila Prabhupada: Hm?

Bhakticharu: Ota ki byapar hoyechilo, mental distress?

Translation: What was that all about, mental distress?

Srila Prabhupada: Hm hm.

Kaviraja: Boliye, boliye.

Translation: Say it. Say it.

Srila Prabhupada: Vahi bat ... je koi hamko poison kiya.

Translation: ? ? ? ? . That someone has poisoned me.

(After this point Srila Prabhupada does not speak again.)

Wrong Translation

We have left the translation of the first phrase blank because in the book 'Someone Has Poisoned Me' it is mis-translated; a fact admitted by Naveen Krishna prabhu - the translator himself, who has stated that the translation used is not his final translation but was only a very first rough draft.

The book translates the phrase:

"Vahi bat" as "The same thing, I said"

As any Hindi speaker will confirm, the phrase 'vahi bat' means only 'that same discussion/talk', and that is all. 'Vahi' means 'that same', and 'bat' means 'discussion' or 'talk/subject'. Further it can be noted that:

1) The 'I said' part can easily be shown to be wrong. The words 'I' and 'said' are used nowhere in the Hindi. They have been added.

2) In any case Srila Prabhupada had not said previously that he had been poisoned, as the analysis of our previous exchanges proves - he had only stated that someone else had discussed him being poisoned, and even then only showing the symptoms of poisoning, not that he had been poisoned.

Correct Translation

Just to have further confirmation, we were given the following translation from Dr. M. Kapoor, the Principal of Jalan High School, who has a Phd in Hindi:

"That Same Discussion ... That Someone has poisoned me"

Thus the correct translation, both from the literal meanings of the words used, and from the context of the discussion is -
'That same discussion'.

Thus the correct translation is:

Bhakticharu: Ota ki byapar hoyechilo, mental distress?

Translation: What was that all about, mental distress?

Srila Prabhupada: Hm hm.

Kaviraja: Boliye, boliye.

Translation: Say it. Say it.

Srila Prabhupada: Vahi bat... je koi hamko poison kiya.

Translation: That same discussion . that someone has poisoned me.

Actual Meaning

Thus when Srila Prabhupada states 'someone has poisoned me', he is simply identifying the discussion which has led to the 'mental distress'. The talk on the previous day, as we have seen, was indeed in reference to 'someone has poisoned me'. Thus the phrase, 'someone has poisoned me', because it is prefaced with 'that same discussion', is used simply to refer back to the previous discussions in question. A previous discussion in which someone else had spoken of Srila Prabhupada being poisoned, or more accurately, displaying the symptoms of someone being poisoned.

In other words:

- 1) Srila Prabhupada is asked a question - 'what was that all about, mental distress'?
- 2) Srila Prabhupada answers initially - 'that same discussion'.

3) He then clarifies which discussion he is referring to by adding - 'that someone has poisoned me'.

Thus though Srila Prabhupada does speak the words - 'someone has poisoned me' - he only states them to identify the series of talks, which were to do with Srila Prabhupada being poisoned - but in which Srila Prabhupada himself never states that someone has poisoned him. The removal of the words 'I said' completely changes the meaning of the phrase 'that someone has poisoned me':

(1) The same thing, I said .. That someone has poisoned me.

(2) That same discussion . That someone has poisoned me.

In case (1) due to the presence of 'I said', the word 'that' links the phrase 'someone has poisoned me' to 'I said'. This makes it appear that the phrase 'someone has poisoned me' was actually a statement from Srila Prabhupada himself. In case (2) by removing the words 'I said', we have a completely different meaning. The linking word 'that' now simply links 'someone has poisoned me' directly to 'that same discussion'. This renders the phrase 'someone has poisoned me' into being simply the 'same discussion' referred to - where the idea of Srila Prabhupada being poisoned (or more accurately displaying symptoms of being poisoned) is actually stated by someone else, an idea which Srila Prabhupada does not confirm, but only says is 'possible'.

Conclusion

Thus this exchange does not yield any evidence from Srila Prabhupada agreeing that he had been poisoned. He merely confirms that the previous discussions, which themselves do not yield this evidence either, were the cause of his 'mental distress'. (We put the phrase 'mental distress' in inverted commas, because the term was not used by Srila Prabhupada himself).

To conclude anymore than this - such as the fact that Srila Prabhupada had 'mental distress' proves that he must have thought he was poisoned - is speculation of the highest order since it involves trying to directly understand the mind of the Acharya. We may have grounds to investigate further, but that is all - we do not have any evidence that Srila Prabhupada agreed he was being poisoned.

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