

## The Chandra Swami "Connection"

In his book "*Someone Has Poisoned Me*", Nityananda Das has spent a whole chapter trying to establish a link between an Indian man called Chandra Swami and the alleged poisoning of Srila Prabhupada. Although he is unable to provide any real evidence of this, Nityananda Das attempts to persuade the reader through various drawn out innuendos based on totally unrelated facts.

Much of the chapter is devoted to the testimony of Adikesava Das, who was the devotee who personally obtained the makaradhvaja from the Delhi kaviraja. We contacted Adikesava in January, 2000 to discuss the same issue. To Adikesava's credit his account was very thorough and meticulous and corresponded accurately with his recollections recorded in Nityananda's book.

One of Adikesava's first comments was, "I talked to Nityananda about all of this, but he didn't like what he heard. I am not in any particular camp, but it was just strange to me that he had a whole idea about how the makaradhvaja was obtained before he had even talked to any of the people involved." It seems that Nityananda Das had a preconceived notion of what had happened, and was trying to make the facts fit this theory. If we read Nityananda's book, we will find Adikesava's summation to be strikingly accurate. Throughout the chapter (as well as throughout the book as we have documented on more than one occasion), Nityananda Das rejects the scientific process of documenting recorded facts and then discussing the most likely cause. Rather, he prefers to advance his own theory by using little pieces of information intertwined with innuendo in order to justify his position.

Adikesava's story regarding Chandra Swami as spoken to us and told to Nityananda goes something like this:

Adikesava considered Chandra Swami to be a dodgy character from the beginning, but he provided some assistance, most notably in the ISKCON court case in New York in 1977. He also introduced Adikesava to another yogi, who was much more genuine and appreciative of Prabhupada and ISKCON, Yogi Bhajan. After the court case, Adikesava had little contact with Chandra Swami, although other devotees such as Bhagavat Das, worked with Chandra Swami to some extent in New York, trying to get favourable press for ISKCON.

In late 1977, Adikesava dropped in to Chandra Swami's Delhi office on his way to Vrindavan as a courtesy call. Chandra Swami told him that Indira Gandhi wanted to see Prabhupada. However upon being asked, Prabhupada declined the offer. Adikesava left Chandra Swami's Delhi office that day, never to see him again.

After Srila Prabhupada had his dream of the Ramanuja kaviraja preparing makaradhvaja in October 1977, Adikesava was one of the devotees sent to find such a kaviraja. Naturally, he thought of his contact Chandra Swami, who certainly had more Delhi contacts than any ISKCON devotee and may have known where a Ramanuja kaviraja was to be found. However, upon ringing his office, Adikesava found only his secretary there and he talked to him regarding his mission. The secretary said he knew where a Vaisnava kaviraja could be found who was very famous and was even treating Morarji Desai. He offered to take Adikesava and Satadhanya to see the kaviraja.

When they arrived they were brought to the front of the long queue fairly quickly, at which time they told the kaviraja their story, including Srila Prabhupada's dream. The kaviraja was actually not a Vaisnava but wore the horizontal tilak of a Saivite. However he was very respectful of Srila Prabhupada's position and stated that although he wouldn't normally prescribe makaradhvaja to someone so weak, he would on this occasion because, "Bhagavan has spoken so who am I to disagree". Although giving the makaradhvaja, the kaviraja gave specific instructions to warn Srila Prabhupada that this medicine was extremely strong and may have very negative effects on him.

As Adikesava had to travel on to New York, Satadhanya was left to take the makaradhvaja back to Srila Prabhupada in Vrindavan. After taking the medicine twice Prabhupada did in fact experience a bad reaction to it, just as the kaviraja had warned, and stopped taking it.

From this testimony, Nityananda das tries to insinuate all kinds of unsubstantiated facts regarding the 'connection' with Chandra Swami. These include the idea that Chandra Swami was acting as an agent for Indira Gandhi, and that he tried to poison Srila Prabhupada on her behalf.

However, all of these allegations are totally speculative, and have no basis in factual evidence or testimony. The following excerpt from Nityananda Das's chapter on the Chandra Swami 'connection' is indicative of his approach. That an impartial author can use the terms 'wonder', 'might be', 'may have' and 'could have' so many times in one small paragraph should immediately alert the reader to the speculative nature of his work:

*It is not far-fetched to wonder what the Indira Gandhi/ Chandra Swami/ makaradhvaja/ Srila Prabhupada poisoning connection might be. Not only may the makaradhvaja from Chandra Swami have been "tainted", but he may have supplied poison for use against Srila Prabhupada. Enemies of Srila Prabhupada from outside of ISKCON could have hooked up with the poisoners inside ISKCON - SHPM p37.*

The main problems with the theory of some connection to Chandra Swami in the alleged poisoning of Srila Prabhupada are as follows.

1. As stated by Adikesava, Chandra Swami had no contact at all with the devotees looking after Srila Prabhupada in the time leading up to Prabhupada's illness in 1977.
2. Even in the actual case where Chandra Swami's office was contacted to recommend a kaviraja, Chandra Swami himself was not directly involved. The devotees rang his secretary with no prior warning, and the secretary took them to a kaviraja who took medicine from his stock in full view. There is no evidence that Chandra Swami even knew about this.
3. There is absolutely no motive for Indira Gandhi to want to poison Srila Prabhupada. Even if she had a motive, he was obviously very close to leaving his body in 1977 anyway.
4. Indira Gandhi was favourable to the devotees and she unofficially offered Adikesava political asylum in India during the court case of 1977.
5. Indira Gandhi thought of Prabhupada as a saintly person for whom she had great respect and admiration. She requested Srila Prabhupada's darshan in 1977, at which time Prabhupada declined her offer.

The theory that Chandra Swami was somehow connected to the so-called poisoning of Srila Prabhupada is clearly no more than a wishful fantasy. There is absolutely no factual evidence to support this proposition at all. As Nityananda Das admits in his

conclusion to this chapter, "There is no solid proof of any wrongdoing in the Chandra Swami connection..."

On this point we agree.

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