

'Not that I am Poisoned': The Conversations

Among those who feel there may be some truth to the poison rumours, much of their concern relates to the words spoken by Srila Prabhupada and those around him, in his final days.

Poison theorists like to repeat Prabhupada's words like, "Someone says that someone has given poison, it's possible", and other such equivocal statements. However, although Prabhupada made indirect references to poisoning, relating to what he had heard from friends or how he felt about the makaradhvaja etc, what they seem to overlook is the fact that he made very clear and direct statements to the effect that he wasn't being poisoned:

Tamala Krishna: 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.

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

Prabhupada: I read something.

Nityananda Das and others have attempted to discount this conversation by saying that Srila Prabhupada was trying to keep the truth from his western disciples. This is an attempt to silence Srila Prabhupada and not allow him to speak for himself.

Srila Prabhupada gives an unequivocally straightforward answer to a straightforward question, "No...not that I am poisoned." No amount of word jugglery now or in the future can take away the clear and simple fact that Prabhupada himself denied that he was poisoned.

To back up the argument that Prabhupada was concealing the alleged poisoning from his disciples, the poison advocates claim that he actually revealed the truth in Hindi to the kaviraja about his poisoning, while keeping this information hidden from his disciples.

However, there are serious problems with this theory. Firstly, there is the testimony of Adridharan Das, who was living with the kaviraja in Vrindavan in 1977. He quite rightly claims to know more than anyone of the kaviraja's thoughts on this issue, as he would regularly discuss Srila Prabhupada's health with the kaviraja. Adridharan Das testifies that Srila Prabhupada wasn't hiding anything from his disciples and the content of his Hindi conversations with the kaviraja was not different from his conversations in Hindi:

After the last exchange Adridharan das, who was present at the discussion, asked the Kaviraja, whom Srila Prabhupada was supposedly revealing all this to, what Srila Prabhupada had been referring to when he spoke of poison. Even though in the previous conversation the Kaviraja immediately jumps to the conclusion that Srila Prabhupada was speaking of some malicious poisoning, he later reveals to Adridharan that Srila Prabhupada was actually only referring to the effects of poison having been administered via bad medicine.

Adridharan Das, November, 1999.

But we don't have to accept the kaviraja's and Adridharan's words blindly, we can now go directly to the Hindi translations, recently made available, to see that this is in fact true.

Prabhupada conversations, November 8th, 1977, Vrindavan.

Kaviraja: Ye Maharaj ye kotha ap kaise bola aj ki koi bola hai ki poison diya. Ye apko kuch abhasa hua hai kya?

[Oh, Maharaja, today, how did you say that someone told you that you were given poison? Did you feel something like that?]

Prabhupada: Nahi aise koi hai bol jo dene se aisa hota hai. Sayad koi kilab mein likha hai.

[No, someone said that it happens (symptoms) if it is given. Perhaps it is written in some book.]

Now compare this with the explanation given in English to Tamala Krishna Maharaja later that same day.

Tamala Krishna: 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.

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

Prabhupada: I read something.

Srila Prabhupada confirms, practically word for word, what he told the kaviraja in Hindi i.e. that Prabhupada himself didn't think he had been poisoned, rather someone else had said that he had similar symptoms to poisoning, and Prabhupada himself agreed because he had previously read a book describing the symptoms of poisoning.

Therefore the theory that Srila Prabhupada knew about his own poisoning and only revealed it to native Hindi speakers and not to his English speaking disciples is clearly unfounded. All evidence, both from recorded transcripts and eyewitness testimony, reveals that Prabhupada was consistent in his statements to the kaviraja and to his own disciples regarding his view on his so-called poisoning.

Another section of the conversations that has drawn special attention from those trying to push the poison theory is the section where Prabhupada refers to the conversation of the 9th by saying (in Hindi), "That conversation about that someone has poisoned me." In fact, Nityananda Das has used part of this as the title for his book.

Taken out of context this quote seems quite damning, however upon further examination it becomes clear that Prabhupada wasn't admitting he had been poisoned, but was simply referring to the conversation of the day before.

Adridharan has explained this in his article on the conversations (see appendix 4 for full report):

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

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

Nityananda Das has stated "Vahi bat" as meaning "The same thing, I said". Which gives the phrase the meaning, "The same thing I said, that someone has poisoned me."

This is a mistranslation (as admitted by the translator Naveen Krishna). 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 'subject'.

The fact of the matter is this. Prabhupada never said, "Someone has poisoned me," in response to the question, "Have you been poisoned?" The only time he says these words are in response to, "What was causing you the mental distress this morning?" He replies that it was the talk from the day before about the possibility that someone had poisoned him.

In contrast, the phrase, "Not that I am poisoned," is a direct reply to Tamala Krishna Maharaja's question asking Prabhupada, "Did you say you were poisoned?"

Another very interesting point which has come to light recently, is a report from a senior Bengali doctor stating that it is common terminology for elderly Bengali Vaisnavas to say that they've been poisoned when some treatment doesn't work.

Ameyatma Das reported this in a com message dated 26 January, 2000 (see appendix 3 for full transcript):

Also, one Bengali Dr I was speaking with, I told him what Prabhupada said, how he was being poisoned. He laughed, but was also upset, because he said he has treated many elderly Bengali Vaisnavas and that is a very common expression for older Bengalis when they are given some medicine that does not work well for them. He said that is very common Bengali expression for their generation to complain that the Dr or someone or the medicine is poisoning them. He is a Bengali, Calcutta man, Dr, who treated many older Bengali's so I give his understanding some credibility.

This statement by the Bengali doctor is actually confirmed by Srila Prabhupada himself and it is recorded in the conversations when he is talking about the effects of the makaradhvaja.

Prabhupada: ...reacting adversely. That is proved. Hm?

Tamal Krishna: Yes, it seems so.

Svarupa Damodara: It's two days that we started this medicine.

Prabhupada: And janiya suniya visa khainu. It is acting adversely. If still I take, then, knowingly...

Trivikrama: Drinking poison.

Prabhupada: Hm. That is...

Svarupa Damodara: So we shouldn't consult with this kaviraja anyway? Because this is his medicine.

Prabhupada: No, consulting... When we want direct treatment, how you can consult him?

This conversation from October 27th is a clear example of the exact point made by the Bengali, which is that the Bengali word visa is used in various ways, and doesn't necessarily mean that someone has maliciously given poison.

Despite various speculations and innuendos cast by the poison advocates, the fact will always remain that Srila Prabhupada never specifically said, "I am being poisoned." He did however, more than once, directly say he wasn't being poisoned. The kaviraja, Adridharan Das and Bhakti Caru Swami all agree that Prabhupada's Hindi statements were also in line with this fact.

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