

Prabhupada's Surgeon Confirms: Diabetes to Blame

After being encouraged to further investigate the allegations of arsenic poisoning made by Nityananda Das and others, it was decided that we should try to 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 telephone inquiries with the College of Surgeons we were told that there was a general surgeon by the name of Andrew McIrvine, and following further leads, were able to talk with Dr McIrvine personally on his mobile phone. When Doctor McIrvine heard that we wanted details of an operation he performed 22 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 also asked how long Prabhupada lived for after the operation. I told him that Prabhupada passed away about 2 months after he saw him. Dr McIrvine replied with, "Yes, I would have been surprised had he lived much longer than that considering how advanced his disease was at the time I treated him."

Dr McIrvine agreed to send a statement noting down the important facts that he remembered about Srila Prabhupada's condition at the time. We have included this letter in its entirety at the end of this chapter (see also appendix 1).

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'.

In appendix 7 of SHPM, 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 - SHPM.

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 loss of vision, 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

So Prabhupada clearly showed this common symptom of advanced diabetes, proving Nityananda's statements regarding the loss of vision to be false. However, there is another twist to Nityananda's ever-dynamic presentation. Incredibly, after convincing the reader that loss of vision (as a symptom of diabetes) was not present, Nityananda Das explains that loss of vision (as a symptom of arsenicosis) was well and truly 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.

A9 LOSS OF VISION

due to brain damage or optic nerve damage - SHPM.

In 'Nityananda's Diagnosis' we make the point that the impartial reader should regard Nityananda Das' 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.

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' claim that "not one doctor or kaviraja 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 let

the reader decide how much credence we should put in Nityananda Das' 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:

7 January, 2000.

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 back pressure 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

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