



# ISKCON Communications

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness  
Founder-*Acharya* His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

## Statement Regarding Unfounded Poison Allegations

**ISKCON Communications**  
**Anuttama Dasa, Minister**  
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### Summary

The recently resurfaced poison allegations regarding the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada rely on the same inconclusive sources cited over the past two decades: much-debated audio recordings and an analysis of hair samples.

These claims have already been extensively reviewed, with no conclusive findings to support the theory. In addition, the statements of Srila Prabhupada's immediate caregivers at the time highlight the implausibility of such allegations.

### Full Statement

Allegations that Srila Prabhupada was deliberately poisoned by several of his closest disciples during his last months in this world have recently resurfaced. These allegations have been promoted by a group that named itself the "Justice for Srila Prabhupada Foundation." They claim to have new evidence to support their theory.

Upon examination, the recent allegations rest on the same sources of questionable 'evidence' that have been cited by proponents of this theory for over 20 years. Specifically, the claims rely on two sources of information. The first is a selection of audio recordings from Srila Prabhupada's room in Vrindavan, India, the week before his departure. The second is a set of hair samples from His Divine Grace that were subjected to tests in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The original poisoning allegations began around 1997 based on a series of audio recordings (still available from the BBT archives) of conversations between Srila Prabhupada, his disciples, and others in the days leading up to his passing. In the recordings, Srila Prabhupada openly discusses his symptoms and himself uses the word "poison" in various contexts. Based on these recordings, the promoters of the allegations claim Srila Prabhupada was poisoned. In fact, in a conversation with the Kaviraja, the Ayurvedic doctor treating him, Prabhupada himself dismissed this interpretation and instead said clearly, "No. These kind of symptoms are seen when a man is poisoned. He said like that, not that I am poisoned!" Further information about the tapes may be found in Appendix C.

The original allegations from the late 1990s claimed that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned via the administration of arsenic. Using hair samples that were 20 years old at the time, the tests seemed to show elevated levels of arsenic.

Recognizing the seriousness of these claims, the ISKCON Governing Body Commission (GBC) commissioned two different investigations, in 1997 and 2001. Neither of these investigations, which included testimony from a wide range of disciples present in Vrindavan during 1977, found any merit to the claims of deliberate poisoning.

The second investigation included the expert testimony of the surgeon who treated Srila Prabhupada in September 1977. Dr. Andrew McIrvine, from Watford General Hospital, affirmed in his testimony that his Divine Grace was suffering from irreversible renal failure and advanced diabetes.

In addition to the GBC-commissioned studies, Mayesvara Dasa, a disciple of Srila Prabhupada spent five years investigating the allegations, resulting in his book *Deception* (2020). This study surveys all the available information and provides compelling alternate explanations for the 'evidence' cited by the proponents of the poison theory.

Mayesvara's study explains how Srila Prabhupada used the term "poison" in conversations during his last year; why the so-called "whisper tapes" depend on discredited audio technologies; and why cadmium, which later replaced arsenic by proponents of the theory as the alleged means of poisoning, would be unlikely, if not inconceivable, as a poisoning agent in 1977.

The test of hair samples collected from Srila Prabhupada during his final months does show abnormally high levels of cadmium, yet there are multiple possible explanations for this, including environmental contamination. Furthermore, high levels of cadmium are, by no measure, conclusive evidence of intentional poisoning.

In their public communications, the Foundation has cited Truth Labs Inc., a Hyderabad-based forensics agency that they contracted to investigate and substantiate their allegations. But the Foundation has refused to share the full results of their investigation. Additionally, requests by the Bhaktivedanta Institute to interview their principal investigator, Dr. Poorna Chandra Gandhi Kaza, have been denied. In the absence of full and accurate information about Truth Labs and their methods, limited credence can be given to any of the conclusions they draw.

It is significant to note that forensic sciences do not recommend hair sampling as a test for poisoning. In other fields, hair analysis is used to determine the presence of drugs, alcohol, and DNA matching. However, even in the medical world, such tests are considered controversial and unreliable for diagnoses, and they rarely pass as admissible evidence in legal proceedings.

Perhaps most importantly, it can be noted that not a single disciple who was involved in Srila Prabhupada's care during his final year find these claims even remotely plausible. Moreover, Srila

Prabhupada's closest associates and caregivers repeatedly used words like "impossible" to describe the poisoning theorists' claims.

The findings of these investigations, including the statements of many witnesses, are freely available for those who want to review the evidence mounting against the poison theory. The appendices below provide links to various sources of information.

The Communications Ministry offers this brief summary to inform devotees who may be unaware of the past iterations of the poison claims. We urge the ISKCON community to recognize the integrity of Srila Prabhupada's caretakers and to critically examine the body of evidence that puts to rest this oft debunked theory.

### **Appendix A Useful Resources**

2000 GBC Response: <https://gbc.iskcon.org/2000/>. Also excerpted in [Appendix B](#).

2000 GBC endorsed book *Not That I am Poisoned* (60 pages) compiled by the GBC Ministry for the Protection of ISKCON, available section by section at [Not Poisoned Home Page](#)

2017 Letter of Response from GBC: <https://iskconnews.org/response-to-poison-allegation/>

2020 Rebuttal YouTube Video: "Deception - Poison Conspiracy Fraud"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vA-CzGs8XfA>

2020 Rebuttal book *Deception* (472 pages): <https://www.amazon.com/DECEPTION-extrapolated-conspiracy-ambiguous-spiritual-ebook/dp/B0852Q73G8>

### **Appendix B GBC Resolutions, Year 2000, #617: Poison Controversy Statement:**

WHEREAS, the book *Not That I Am Poisoned*, published by the GBC Ministry for the Protection of ISKCON, establishes that:

1. Srila Prabhupada's medical history shows no evidence of poisoning but rather confirms diabetes as the major factor in His Divine Grace's deteriorated physical health.
2. Forensic (hair) analysis does not show any evidence of poisoning in that the amount of arsenic is compatible with environmental levels and with normal physiological functioning.

3. Recorded conversations indicate that Srila Prabhupada did not believe he was poisoned.
4. Analysis of 'whisper evidence' is inconclusive or can be shown to correlate with spoken conversations of the same time.

WHEREAS, the report submitted by Balavanta Das, commissioned by the GBC Executive Committee, does not contradict the conclusions of the more detailed investigation by the Ministry for the Protection of ISKCON;

617. [STATEMENT] IT IS RESOLVED THAT 1. There is no evidence at this time to support the allegations of poisoning of Srila Prabhupada. This conclusion is based on two independent reports commissioned by the GBC Body.

2. The GBC Body endorses the book *Not That I Am Poisoned* as the most detailed and comprehensive exposition of these allegations to date, and it recommends this book strongly to devotees who may have been affected by or who are interested in this issue.

### **Appendix C** **The Word 'Poison' in Context**

The word 'poison' was used in conversations around Srila Prabhupada's bedside. These conversations referenced three specific themes: Ayurvedic treatments, Srila Prabhupada's failing organs of filtration, and Srila Prabhupada's changed appearance. Regarding Ayurvedic medicines, Srila Prabhupada made it very clear that he preferred Ayurvedic cures over modern allopathic treatments. Consequently, one of the first remedies his caregivers sought out was the potent Ayurvedic medicine *makaradhavaja*. There was a danger with this particular compound because it included mercury. If Srila Prabhupada's body was too frail, it could have a poisonous effect. The word poison was thus introduced into the discussion regarding his health to indicate the limited effectiveness of the treatments and the potential harm they could cause. [BBT Archives Ref: Nov. 8, 771108R2-VRNDAVAN starting at the 6:34 minute mark]  
<https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/771108r2vrn/>

As his condition grew worse, the discussion turned to how Srila Prabhupada's longstanding diabetes had affected the kidneys' usual work of removing waste products and extra fluid from the body. At that time, the conversation included references to how his own blood was acting as a poisoning agent.  
[\[https://iskcon.org.au/notpoisoned/testimonies/Abhirama.htm\]](https://iskcon.org.au/notpoisoned/testimonies/Abhirama.htm)

The third way the word poison entered the dialogue occurred when visitors were shocked to see how frail he had become. Thus, when the Kaviraja asked Srila Prabhupada: "How did you say today that you have been poisoned? Did you get some indication or feeling about this?" Srila Prabhupada's response was clear and unambiguous: "No. Someone said that, if you give then these things happen Maybe it's written in some book?" When Tamala Krsna Goswami asked the

next day “it is said that you were poisoned?” Srila Prabhupada again responded with a firm “No. These kind of symptoms are seen when a man is poisoned. He said like that, not that I am poisoned.” [BBT Archives Ref: Nov. 9 771109R1-VRNDAVAN starting at the 15:36 minute mark] <https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/771109r1vrn/>

Thus, it is not surprising that Srila Prabhupada’s servants would mention “poison” in their concerned discussions. After listening to tapes recorded during the last days that Srila Prabhupada was physically present, some have contended that background whispers contain the word poison and indicate the presence of conspirators discussing their attempt to harm Srila Prabhupada. For instance, some individuals have said that the tapes contain a whispered comment that ‘the poison is going down’ and that this indicates that Srila Prabhupada was drinking a poisoned substance at that time. However, according to the conversation itself and as multiple testimonies have corroborated, the activity in the room at that time was about assisting Srila Prabhupada to lie down from a sitting position. The whisper can be heard as “the swelling is going down” following this change of position. [BBT Archives Ref: Nov. 10, 771110R2-VRNDAVAN at the 1:58 minute mark] <https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/771110r2vrn/>

This and similar examples show that the audio evidence, which has been carefully examined by forensic audio engineers, does not support the allegation that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned by his servants.

In summary, contrary to the allegations made, the available audio does not demonstratively indicate that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned or believed that he himself was poisoned. To suggest otherwise is based on a highly questionable interpretation.

## **Appendix D**

### **A Brief Response to the Cadmium Claim**

As noted above, for years the poison theorists claimed that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned with arsenic. However, in the early 2000s the allegations shifted to cadmium as the primary source of alleged poisoning. One argument given is that tests concluded that the level of cadmium measured in Srila Prabhupada’s hair was about 250x normal.

While this is cited as conclusive evidence of deliberate poisoning, there are more plausible alternate explanations. For instance, the high cadmium levels in the tests could just as likely be due to external contamination of the samples, and/or analytic error. This uncertainty has been noted by experts regarding the validity of such tests. This is also corroborated by Srila Prabhupada’s physical condition in his last years, which was not consistent with the long- term effects of cadmium poisoning.

If the 250x figure was accurate, Srila Prabhupada would have to have been administered cadmium over the course of several years. Such long-term exposure would have resulted in other conditions of cadmium poisoning including bone weakening, liver damage, respiratory issues,

and a compromised cardiovascular system; none of which Prabhupada exhibited. One of the likely long-term effects of cadmium exposure is kidney disease, which is a disease from which Srila Prabhupada suffered. But, without the other symptoms being present, the conclusion of the poison theorists is highly speculative and unlikely.

## **Appendix E**

### **Personal Testimonies**

Many personal testimonies have been recorded from respected and senior disciples of Srila Prabhupada who were with Prabhupada in his last days, and who personally dispute any speculation that Srila Prabhupada was administered poison during his last few months and days on this earth.