

"OUR MISSION PART TWO"

The Varieties of Dysfunctional Experience

by Kundali dasa, 1996

*To Vrndavana prabhu,
who was a victim
of our dysfunctional dynamics;
and
to present and future sincere followers
of Srila Prabhupada
who appreciate
that the candle of enlightenment
lights all directions;
who appreciate
that in distinguishing reality from illusion,
no one is exempted
from critical scrutiny;
and
who appreciate
that anyone closed to such scrutiny
is especially suspect.*

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta on the Real Sadhu

There are many things which we do not disclose to the *sadhu*. The real *sadhu* makes us speak out what we keep concealed in our hearts. He then applies the knife. The very word "sadhu" has no other meaning than this. He stands in front of the block with the uplifted sacrificial knife in his hand. The sensuous desires of men are like the goats. The *sadhu* stands there to kill those desires by the merciful stroke of the keen edge of the sacrificial knife in the form of unpleasant language. If the *sadhu* turns into my flatterer then he does me harm; he becomes my enemy. If he gives me flattery then we are led to the road that brings enjoyment but no real well-being. (*Sri Caitanya's Teachings*)

Srila Prabhupada on Satyam (Truth)

Satyam, truthfulness, means that facts should be presented as they are, for the benefit of others. Facts should not be misrepresented. According to social conventions, it is said that one can speak the truth only when it is palatable to others. But that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straightforward way, so that others will understand actually what the facts are. If a man is a thief and if people are warned that he is a thief, that is truth. Although sometimes the truth is unpalatable, one should not refrain from speaking it. Truthfulness demands that the facts be presented as they are for the benefit of others. That is the definition of truth. (*Bhagavad-gita*)

They (devotees) speak only the *satyam* (truth) although it may not necessarily be *priyam* (sweet). (*Letter to Sumati Morarji*)

Mangalacaranam

Lord Krsna says that every endeavor has some fault. I pray at His lotus feet, however, that this work will be free from the particular faults of envy and malice, of any motive for revenge or other such taints of the lower modes of nature.

I pray that honest readers will persevere in discriminating between mixed and pure devotional service. Specifically, that they will understand that authoritarian dynamics at best provides the grandest of all illusions--the illusion of Krsna consciousness. May all such honest persons reciprocate with me in two ways--embody this knowledge in their lives, and share it with others.

I pray that my small attempt to serve the mission of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu by performing welfare work pleases Him, along with his representatives, Sri Rupa, Sanatana, Bhatta Raghunath, Sri Jiva, Gopal Bhatta, Das Raghunatha and their faithful followers, down to my own divine master, Om Visnupada Paramahansa Parivajakacarya A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, all of whom protected our wealth of transcendental knowledge from defilement and were intolerant of any conclusions contrary to the tenets of pure devotional service. May they confer on me the courage to always have a similar intolerance.

Hare Krsna.

FOREWORD

This was not written to be a foreword. After a couple of drafts I circulated copies of the manuscript to some devotees to get their critical feedback about the work. One of those devotees wrote the following message as a spontaneous response to reading only a few pages of the unpolished manuscript.

Dear Prabhu:

For your records: It was in 1989 at the Vyaspuja of my spiritual master that I found myself deeply pondering my life, my 12 years in the movement. It struck me that I was not going anywhere. I felt annoyed and uncertain about what to do. At that time I thought of myself in these terms: "I am going nowhere. I feel like a dog chasing its own tail. I have not moved an inch in many years." I was feeling frustrated, as if a lot of time had been wasted, as if a significant portion of my life had not been properly utilized.

I wondered. But, of course, I consoled myself, that this frustration was itself the price I had to pay to advance in spiritual life, that this frustration of not achieving anything would mature into complete detachment from the material world, and that my feelings that I was not moving at all in Krsna consciousness was only apparent, for by not achieving anything in this life, I would have nothing to be attached to, and therefore at the end, surely, I will go to the spiritual world.

This is my example of the illusion of progressing out of illusion. I kept pushing myself for another couple of years, until I decided to take my life in my hands, to make my own decisions about what was the best service for me and where I should stay according to my capacity and resources. I think I did this move barely in time, before the panorama became completely dark. I thought: "Fourteen years have passed, I've changed the body twice. I have given my authorities plenty of time to train me, and look where I am. I better train myself!" I made this my only guiding principle: To be sure (or at least try to ascertain) that whatever I do is for the service of Krsna.

I think many, many devotees have had similar experiences, but unlike myself they are now completely disassociated from ISKCON, and from the practices of sadhana-bhakti, because although they were able to feel as deeply, they may have lacked a good philosophical basis, or as you would say, the courage to move out of the herd.

I want to offer you my most humble obeisances for producing this book, which gives our members the tools, the knowledge and the language to identify clearly the situation, and the courage to move ahead. Thank you. I say thank you many times, and this only after reading the first ten pages.

(Author's name withheld for fear of political backlash)

PREFACE

Dear Reader,

Please accept my obeisances at your feet. All glory to Srila Prabhupada. It is with a heavy heart that I present this book. After many months of research in group dynamics, I have come to appreciate that the situation in our society is far worse than I thought when I wrote *Our Mission*. Knowledge brings with it a heavy burden. Can one be aware or awake to some detrimental circumstance and not do all in one's power to make others aware as well?

According to Lord Rsabhadeva, no gentleman can do that. With no pretensions of modesty, it is a fact that I'm a far cry from being a gentleman; but I want to become one and I believe it is only possible by practice. Therefore if I'm to live with my conscience, I see no choice but to present this knowledge to the worldwide community of devotees. As shocking as some of the ensuing discussions are, this represents less than half of the original manuscript; and anecdotal material used herein are significantly less than I could have supplied. There is enough herein to digest for one volume.

My credo in writing this book is as follows:

In striving to raise awareness of our dysfunctional dynamics and the resulting inadvertent sham, and in advocating keener discrimination on the part of the devotees in general, I do not imply that any specific leaders and practitioners in our movement are consciously dishonest or intend to deceive the public or each other. I believe that many of our leaders intend to do good and believe in the usefulness of their efforts.

Yet, as someone said, there is not merely conscious and intended swindle. The socially more dangerous sort is the one in which the performers honestly *believe* their way is the optimum way or that we should trust them to find it and therefore need not apply our intelligence to the problems. Just trust them and follow ("Cooperate for Srila Prabhupada)."

To counter this most beguiling form of swindle, certain things have to be said; *indeed even at the risk of my being taken as personally attacking well-meaning people.*

Preachers of Krsna consciousness must always take such risks, because it makes all the difference between whether we lance boils or blow on them. Even a very intelligent patient, irrevocably certain that lancing is the only way, may still flinch at the sight of the scalpel; but the good doctor cuts anyway. Later the patient appreciates his seeming callousness.

Preaching, like medicine and soldiering, is not a calling for the fainthearted.

To be saintly, or to become saintly, one must be prepared to use sharp words to cut attachments. There is no value in preaching so everyone loves us at the risk of blurring the truth, whether the topic is the agony of this world or the ecstasy of the spiritual world. Persons of integrity value truth above all considerations. This is surely the import of the *tad vag visargoverse* of *Bhagavatam*. Prabhupada said that to cut the mind from attachment it is necessary to use *ukti*, sharp words. Thus while a saintly person--or in my case merely one trying to be saintly--tries to speak palatably, ultimately, Srila Prabhupada taught, when he speaks there is "no mercy." He speaks the unadorned truth, and that is real mercy. Thus it is said, "*Sadhu* means to cut." Not the individual, but the illusion.

Illusion does not present itself in stark contrast to truth. Most times it is entwined with the truth. To enable you, dear reader, to recognize the truth you must also know the varieties of dysfunctional dynamics. Alas, it is not possible to accomplish my goal without some peeling

away the layers covering the truth. The operation can be messy, but it must be done, for there lies the path to health.

My purpose is to make you baffle-proof, so that you will not enact irrational behavior on anyone and will not allow it to be enacted on you. This simple provision will upgrade the atmosphere in our society beyond words. I advocate hard-headed realism. This practice turns around *a will not to deceive, and not to be deceived*.

There will always be some flaw in every enterprise in the material world and ISKCON is no exception. In *Listen, Little Prabhu* I'm not making a plea for instant perfection, and idyllic ISKCON. The aim is not idealism--a total elimination of all irrational occurrences--but realism. The difference is one of degree. Do we have primarily irrational, dysfunctional dynamics and secondarily rational, sober dealings, or vice versa?

Let's recast the question: Do we want ISKCON to operate primarily in *rajo guna or sattva guna*? Some would prefer that I'd say we should operate in pure goodness, and indeed we should, but realism calls for us to take this journey in stages. Herein the reader will find that we are so far off the mark, it would be romantic from where we presently stand to hope for something beyond *sattva-guna*. Thus the central aim of this book is to alert us to the downside of having a predominantly *rajo guna* atmosphere in our society, which translates into a power-driven administrative and social system, endless politics in the fight for survival, acquisitiveness, self-estrangement, one-upmanship, hegemony over the lives of others, and the culture of herd consciousness, the natural enemy of independent thinking.

In my attempt to address this problem and to encourage the society as a whole to operate more in *sattva guna*, I was not prepared initially to meet the resistance that I'm getting. I didn't want to believe the depth of the problems caused by *rajas* and *tamas*. Experience, however, is changing my stance from extreme idealism to hard-headed realism. In that sense, I'm growing and so I do not regret the discovery of how difficult it is to pop the bubble of illusion in our society.

Because of my stance of loyal opposition, I've been accused of being against the GBC. This is a misunderstanding. To be "against" the GBC is tantamount to accusing me of deserting my spiritual master, for the GBC is his scheme for running ISKCON. I am not against the GBC. I have never been against the GBC; and I will never be against the GBC. If I must be described in terms of what I'm against, I am against maya. If that manifests as being against the GBC, one possibility is that perhaps a closer look at the GBC is in order.

Personally, I rather be described in terms of what I'm for, than what I'm against: I'm for encouraging independent thinking, within the parameters of the *parampara* philosophy; I'm for a radical increase in rational thinking and conduct both with devotees and with the world at large; I'm for honesty, integrity, straightforward dealings, and accountability of the leaders for the things they say and do; I'm for collegial dealings and consensus leadership; I'm for the GBC serving as a mechanism to empower individuals to become self-trusting and self-possessed human beings. I'm for a GBC body that serves, rather than subverts, the *parampara* philosophy. The list is long but one gets the drift.

In a nutshell, I'm for every devotee to have this attitude: *That I shall not deceive anyone and I shall not be deceived by anyone*.

The foremost implication of this attitude will be that one examines *everything*. One accepts or rejects nothing blindly, starting with this book. If I say things that do not stand up to the critical examination of reason, in light of the *parampara* philosophy, I expect, in the spirit of the *mac citta mat gatah prana* verse, to be challenged. And I hope that in the ensuing rational discussion, by book, by letter, or by personal contact, I can hold my position from all angles of vision. If not, then I am ready to concede to a better understanding, if within some reasonable period of time I fail to have the suitable reasoning to defend my position. Please, dear reader, do not mistake my confidence for intractability.

I'm only intractable on one point--on matters of practical or philosophical concern to me, I do not accept any outcome that is not reached by rational procedures, namely open discussion. That is to say, I reject, categorically, all manifestations and permutations of bullying, intimidation, etc., which are symptoms of the lower modes of nature, and therefore have no place in the realm of Vaisnava dealings. I urge all my readers to do likewise, no matter their status in the society.

This proposal that we accept nothing blindly and reject nothing blindly is, naturally, a huge task. But I know that you, dear reader, know that it is an excellent idea, that it is actually our duty--sifting the data that comes to our attention from both our subjective and objective worlds, that there really is no other way, no shortcut to being free from doubt and delusion. You should be confident in making this effort because the *Bhagavatam* has already assured you that it is the highest welfare work.

Also, I know that you know we pretend to be doing this when we are not. One of the pitfalls on the royal road of spiritual life is an underlaying yet pervasive preference for comfort over truth. Examining everything is a huge responsibility, especially, it is hard work. Often what we find by this effort both inside ourselves and outside make us uncomfortable a good deal of the time. We like feeling secure. When our *acaryas* write about laziness, it is this tendency to intellectual letargy they refer to, not to the unwillingness to earn money or even rise early in the morning. The sensation of being warm and fuzzy is much preferred to work--even if that work may make all the difference as to whether we live in truth or illusion. Breaking out of this can take lifetimes.

□ Ah, and how do we sidestep facing this treacherous tendency? What plausible lie do we tell ourselves? "I am surrendered to ISKCON. I lay my head in its lap and I cooperate out of love for Srila Prabhupada." It's a powerful plausible lie, an opiate.

And we don't want that anyone think we are so shallow as to live a lie, so we make a show of examining everything when actually we follow the herd 90 percent of the time, or more.

We have another plausible lie to rationalize our laziness to examine everything. We tell ourselves that examining everything shows a lack of faith in Krsna. Since *the game* in ISKCON is to come off as more advanced than we actually are, this game is spontaneously attractive to the majority of us, because we can't be seen as lacking faith in Krsna.

I want to challenge this view with this thought of Galileo: "God did not give us intelligence so we can forego its use." Indeed, in the *Bhagavad-gita* He assures us that if we use all our intelligence for Him "I shall give you more intelligence by which you can come to Me." The Lord is saying that you must examine everything, because that is the primary function of the intelligence, to discriminate. Then the Lord will give you more. He indicates that He wants to help us by enabling us to help ourselves. Our task is to have faith and to apply ourselves.

If you consider the mammoth job of accepting or rejecting nothing blindly overwhelming, I suggest you read verses 10.4-5 in *Bhagavad-gita* and Prabhupada's purport carefully. Then return to reading this book.

Before closing it is fitting that I address those uneasy with my emphasis on using all our intelligence in the process of devotional service. My stress in this area may appear one-sided, as revealing a weakness in the faith department, or perhaps even appear irreligious. After all, many devotees, unfortunately, give greater stress in their preaching to "mercy," or "grace" than to "our own personal effort." In my writings, the absence of such expressions of hope and prayer for grace is not an indication of disregard for the possibility of divine intervention, or the absence of desire for it; indeed, I pray for it daily.

Expressions of hope and grace are not set forth here because I assume that the reader understands that God helps those who help themselves. Grace flows automatically to those who do everything in their capacity to achieve pure Krsna consciousness, all the while knowing that their effort is not all it takes. This is the import of the *anayas cintayanto mam*

verse. Those who think that since their effort is not all it takes, better to simply go at half sail while waiting for grace, I consider unfortunate. Misguided.

About hope, a seventeenth century Jesuit monk left us this salutary caution: "Hope by itself, is a great falsefyer. Let good judgment keep her in check." In my exhorting you, therefore, to think of Krsna consciousness as effortful instead of effortless, let's not forget that desiring the grace of Krsna is not in question. Indeed grace and works go side by side in His devotional service.

Saints have expressed this in different ways. Augustine said, "Pray as if everything depends on God; work as if everything depends on you;" Ignatius Loyola advised similarly, "Use human means as though divine ones didn't exist, and divine means as though there were no human ones;" and our Srila Prabhupada said: "It is alright to pray for Krsna's mercy, as long as your prayer is accompanied by your endeavor." and the Spanish say, "Pray to God, but hammer away. . . ." Essential truth spoke concisely is true eloquence, indeed. We have books with prayers, or exclusively on prayer. This book is exclusively on hammering. . .

INTRODUCTION

This book is for people concerned with groups and with what can go wrong with organizations and groups. But it is intended to be a scientific work and not a kind of handy manual for leaders. The approach is that of the engineer who was called to repair a boiler. He found a stuck valve, rapped it sharply and restored service. He submitted a bill for \$100. The owner said that was a lot for a single hammer blow; he requested an itemized statement. The engineer wrote back, "Hitting the boiler with hammer, \$1. Knowing where to hit, \$99." That is to say that 99 percent of the text is devoted to a practical understanding of how real organizations work, since knowing that is what makes the therapy of ailing groups possible.

This quote is from the introduction to *The Structure and Dynamics of Organizations and Groups* by Eric Berne, who spent a considerable part of his life in the practice of group healing. In this volume, the focus is specifically on the point of his last sentence--that a practical understanding of how our organization works is what makes the therapy of our ailing group possible. As such, another possible title for this series (there will be at least two more volumes on group dynamics) would have been "*Lessons in Belling the Cat*."

We have been conditioned, much to our detriment, to believe in waiting for solutions to problems to come from above, the top-down approach. (In the chapter before the last is a terrific example of a leader imposing this conditioning). Therefore it is possible that several devotees may think it out of place to present books of a socio-psychological nature to the mass of our members. My hope is that by the end of this book, even the most reluctant reader will appreciate that this is a mistake. Indeed blind acceptance of the top-down method is one of the central causes of our varieties of dysfunctional dynamics.

Readers will be thrilled to discover that this entire book serves as an explanation of these memorable words from Srila Prabhupada:

The Krishna Consciousness Movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action, not for making bureaucracy. Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing is spoiled. There must be always individual striving and work and responsibility,

competitive spirit, not that one shall dominate and distribute benefits to the others and they do nothing but beg from you and you provide. No.
(Letter to Karandhara, 1972)

Before the last chapter, lovers of Srila Prabhupada will agree that his brief passage is pregnant with meaning. They will appreciate another statement he voiced quite often in his last two years with us. Words to this effect: "I have given you the framework. Now fill in the details." Our operative assumption is that the top-down method is the method of choice in addressing issues in our society, therefore it is sacrilegious to be outspoken unless one first reaches the top. Or one can be outspoken, providing a significant amount of the effort is spent in homage, praise, and flattery to the top.

Owing to this disempowering misconception, publication of the first volume of *Our Mission* brought the full weight of the GBC to bear on me. Understandably, some are in denial about their role in the current chaotic condition of ISKCON. Hence the body (not every member, but the majority), and certainly the most vocal members, did not like that I dared to publish a book giving honest critical feedback and analysis of the dynamics in our society, and to some extent, unavoidably, casting them in an unflattering light. This they did not articulate openly. They complained about "the delivery." The code for "not enough homage, praise, and flattery."

I met with a GBC sub-committee for four hours to discuss the book, but we never got around to doing so. My attempts to focus on the subject matter of the book were ignored. Meanwhile, no one specified what was wrong with the delivery. Presumably, they would have better appreciated a more oblique approach, something more abstract. "More tactful." I cannot abide by this for it would have the non-virtue of allowing them to sidestep responsibility for the dynamics that they set in motion.

Considering the urgency of our situation, which *The Varieties of Dysfunctional Experience* amply proves, an abstract or roundabout approach is inappropriate. In a fire, one does not first shower, shave, put on his best suit and then go around whispering to all the tenants, "Excuse me, but I think perhaps there is a fire on at the moment and it is probably a good idea to evacuate the building before the smoke and flames get you." No. One yells, "Fire!!!"

Within a few chapters readers will agree that I have ample reason to yell fire. I am not sure what kind of tactful delivery would have pleased my GBC godbrothers and still state the truth lucidly, logically, and undeniably. In my experience, spanning 23 years of involvement in ISKCON, tact is often confused with Vaisnava etiquette, then insisted upon, and then the issue sidestepped. Tact gets in the way of truth and real Vaisnava etiquette is to cleave to the truth. What is one to do to elevate the truth so that it is prominent and visible to all willing to look in its direction?

Still, accepting the complaint about delivery, rational men do not use "the delivery" as a valid reason to sidestep facts, for they consider content more vital than form; and Vaisnavas are supposed to be the most rational people. We do not become the most rational by acting irrationally. Squabbling over the delivery at the total neglect of the content is like refusing to leave the burning building because one did not like the manner in which someone yelled fire. It's a sign of insincerity.

Yet, Krsna says every endeavor is covered by some fault, so I accept in principle that the fault in this case could have been the delivery. Still I fail to see how that justified the GBC's attempt to ignore the content.

Worse, they attempted to punish the author. All this simply underscored the central point of the book--that we have an atmosphere of dysfunctional or irrational authoritarian dealings in our positive alternative society and that the problem is from the top down. Had we actually invested time in the issues of my concern instead of attacking me, there would have been no

need for this volume and the succession of volumes I have planned so I can unburden my heart of what I understand about the danger of authoritarian dynamics.

In light of these considerations and the GBC's failure to specify what was wrong with the delivery, reading between the lines, I had to conclude that the delivery was perhaps not the issue at all, but the truth of the analysis. Problems are not solved by ignoring them, or getting rid of the person who pointed to the problem. When the boy said the emperor had no clothes, vanquishing the boy would have done nothing at all to strengthen the emperor's case. Indeed it would have reflected badly on him, unless, of course the whole kingdom was already dysfunctional.

Interestingly, protest about "the delivery" also says something about our inconsistent dynamics. Had the book been a volume of praise of the GBC--even excessive praise, which Prabhupada says in *Caitanya-caritamrta* is "another kind of blasphemy"--I have no doubt it would have been welcomed, hailed in the *GBC Journal*, *ISKCON World Review*, the *Prabhupada Toshani*, and other forums. We would not have heard a word about "the delivery."

In other words, praise is acceptable, even if excessive. Yet valid criticism, as shown by the favorable response to *Our Mission* from all around the world, is not permissible. We know, instinctively, that an individual who can only hear praise is unbalanced. What can we conclude about an organization with the same symptom? One observer has remarked that in organizations where wavemaking is not tolerated, only mediocrities rise to the top. A disappointing consideration if true for us. After all, ISKCON is meant to cause a revolution in the hearts of men.

The widespread favorable response to *Our Mission* conveyed something I did not address in that volume--that our leaders are alienated from the rank and file of our society. They are out of touch. The way of such alienation is traced out in the chapter "Alienation as Self-estrangement."

There are always two sides to a story. In contrast to the resistance from the GBC, several hundred devotees from all corners of the world, some GBC men and temple presidents included, did not agree with the official story of the GBC. They thought the book was a valuable and timely contribution. A GBC man confided to a friend of mine that "Every word in Kundali's book is true." Another said that "Every devotee should read this book. I did not feel threatened by it at all." Privately he told me he wanted to see everything that I write. While in Mayapur to face a GBC committee, without being told that I was on trial and with no formal charge, on many consecutive days a temple president came up to me from behind and said, "Stick to your guns, Kundali. Stick to your guns." Another one wrote:

As you have said, ISKCON does not sufficiently practice self-evaluation--in fact it seems that many of our leaders are not comfortable with the idea of such analysis. Personally, I welcome it and I found that all points you made found great resonance within me. I feel great relief that someone has had the presence of mind and "guts" to state so keenly these observations--many of which I had also made but would not have known how to articulate it so well.

I received a letter from a godbrother whom I'd never met. He wrote:

Over the last ten years life in New Vrndavan has been very difficult. When the whole thing fell apart completely three years ago there were only three ways to deal with it. One, to go on in a malaise as many devotees have been doing for years. Two, to take even greater shelter of the maladies that put us here in the first place. Or three, taking a deep, often painful, look at yourself. If a devotee

chose to look deeply at himself what he saw for the most part he didn't like. And clearly where we are at personally has been greatly affected by the paradigms we have come to accept as part of this movement.

I'm in the process of reading your book and I find that you also have chosen the path of the deep hard look. As I began reading it, I thought that certainly you must have been sitting somewhere in my living room over these last few years writing down almost word for word the discussions I have been having with god brothers. Your preface and introduction alone contained more than I have found in all of the literatures put out by any of the various devotees worldwide. Not only have you honestly searched out the sources of the society's dilemma, but have been strong enough to begin the process of bringing it to the attention of the devotees.

One more, again from a godbrother who I've never met:

I felt that if I was a writer I would have written a book similar to yours. What you have said is clear, intelligent, based on logic, good sense and *parampara*. . . . Otherwise ISKCON as it is now is in a weak shape, cannot do good for devotees and the people in general.

In the 22 years that I've joined, I feel frustrated, because I know Prabhupada gave us a "matchless gift", but at the same time we are misusing it. It's quite rare in our movement to find really good and clear-minded devotees. Generally, devotees are dogmatic, fanatical, narrow-minded, etc. . .

I received similar responses from Italy, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Puerto Rico, Australia, England, France, and other places. The reason I'm not naming the sources of these quotes is simply that I fear repercussions to these persons for stating their honest feelings about their perceptions of life in ISKCON. Our leaders deny that the authoritarian dynamic is in place, but only the most naive reader will think me unwise for protecting my sources. They say *Our Mission* is not a valid contribution. The proof: They did not accept it. This is practically hilarious. It plays right into the hands of the basic theme of the book--that in the authoritarian dynamic, the leaders assume the role of defining reality for the rest of our society. Literally hundreds of devotees around the world testify that it is indeed a contribution, but the very people the book does not flatter want to assume the role of deciding it's merit. This is how pathetic our society has become, but assuming the parental stance, our leaders really believe we must assume the child role and let them define reality for us. We must assume that because they have a title, they automatically have more insight to Prabhupada's teachings than the rest of us. More insight, more brain, more realization, more everything. That is fine by most of us, as long as their dealings verify their tacit claim. In other words, they should demonstrate it, not simply believe that we should assume it. Show, don't tell.

My contention is that any social system in which praise is the only truly appreciable coin of communication between the leaders and followers; in which loyal opposition is thought the enemy; and criticism and questioning, however unpalatable the questions may be, is punishable, is an authoritarian society--and a sick one. Lofty ideals notwithstanding, it is not a sane society; rather it is dysfunctional. It may even be downright evil. To the extent that the dynamics are at odds with the doctrine, the group or organization is more or less a swindle.

Prabhupada did not want swindle. He never said "Distribute my books, attract people, and take them for a ride." He said: "Do good for others."

The GBC also voiced secondary objections to *Our Mission*. Heading that list was their concern for the book's impact on the faith of the younger devotees. Well, maybe that was actually primary, but only voiced secondarily. Anyway, their concern was tacit admission that my claim of authoritarian dynamics was correct, because their concern was not for the *truth or falsity of my analysis, but for the impact that my telling the truth would have on new devotees*. My concern, however, was greater: What about the impact of authoritarian dynamics (which is to say cult dynamics) on *all* devotees categorically, including the leaders themselves?

If we do have authoritarianism, and if that is not the true dynamics of Vaisnavism, why should the new devotees not be told? Why should the innocent be duped? How can we get out of illusion by subscribing to another one? Why encourage their faith in the wrong experience? My knowing and not telling means my willful participation in a system of deception. To be a faithful follower of Srila Prabhupada, am I required to deceive others, even if such deception goes against my conscience, the spirit and intent of his mission, and does naught but lead to a superficial kind of Krsna consciousness? Our business is opening eyes, not stuffing them with wool.

Ironically, the GBC's denial was not accompanied by a presentation of facts to counter the analysis in the book; it consisted of an attempt to punish and humiliate the bearer of the unhappy news and a transparent attempt to drive him out of the society. Naturally, this procedure, instead of dispelling my claim of authoritarian dynamics, only confirmed it.

To illustrate further the problem of our dynamics I shall cite some examples of my experience with the GBC's reaction to *Our Mission*. One objection was "You quote meat-eaters in the book." I do not know the dietary practices of the persons I quote. I would have researched that, but I fail to see the relevance, because it was not a book on diet. Among intelligent men, someone's utterance either makes sense or it doesn't. Unless diet itself is the topic, what does the person's diet contribute? Vegetarians have no monopoly on truth, wisdom, practical matters, or even character. Hitler was a strict vegetarian. Many Mayavadis are also, yet they are the greatest offenders to Krsna.

I know many vegetarians--who chant *japa* and wear *tilaka*--but lack integrity and a moral compass, who lie and manipulate others as a regular daily function, who have a capacity for making such unsound arguments that many meat-eaters in a similar position would cringe with embarrassment to hear them. I've had the depressing experience of meeting such people among the leaders at the very top of our society. So where does that leave us?

It is irrational to damn the source of an utterance rather than judge a thing on its merit. The *ad hominem* attack is a fallacy, but we never miss a chance to use it. Intelligent persons know instantly that its use shows lack of integrity. If a meat-eater, murderer, thief, and womanizer says that the sky is blue, must we feel obliged to disagree because of his vices? Or must we put the self-evident truth on hold pending a quote from Bhaktivinoda? Krsnadasa Kaviraja cites Pingala, a prostitute, to establish the highest point in our philosophy, love in separation. And recalling her truthful words put Lord Caitanya into ecstasy, so, do we scoff at her and reject Him and the *Bhagavatam* for quoting a harlot?

Finally, I am not a meat-eater. I may quote anyone in order to make a point, but the point is being made by me. Thus, when someone hides behind these fallacies, we should counter by insisting that they forget about the speaker and stick to the point, for I suspect that had I quoted only vegetarians, they would have voiced some other fallacious excuse to sidestep the issues at hand.

An alternative would be to insist that if we reject out of hand the thoughts of meat-eaters, then let us be consistent. Let us not buy their cars, paper for printing books, telephones, computers, food product, clothes, etc. Let us not learn from them in all spheres of knowledge. Let us quit

their colleges and universities. Let us not fly in their airplanes, use their trains, taxis, electricity, nor live in their buildings. Let us not see their doctors and dentists. Let us reject meat-eaters across the board and not even accept their money or their ideas about management. Let us quit preaching that *utility* is the principle. Let us live in a bubble, and if we have to go through generations of trial and error to re-invent the wheel, then so be it. Why be inconsistent?

I have a problem with this proposal. Foolish consistency, it is said, "is the hobgoblin of little minds." The converse, however, foolish inconsistency, is no better alternative. Both versions are irrational and can only make our predicament of bad dynamics worse and make ISKCON even more unattractive to intelligent people.

The conclusion of all these considerations is that the preacher of Krsna consciousness should simply preach for the honest person, the man and woman of integrity, whenever they may grace the earth. History shows repeatedly that in those whom the need for illusion is deep, the news of disillusionment will not be heeded even if uttered with the voice of an angel. But in our noble lineage, our *acaryas* have set a standard of risking all despite the folly of others. They did not blow on boils; they lanced them and squeezed. Sometimes it is a thankless task. Prabhupada sometimes said that preaching is like throwing a brick: You can tell those who get hit, because they yelp the loudest.

As for my quoting non-devotees, who are experts on organizational self-examination, psychology, etc., I make no excuses. I've learned from Prabhupada that "utility is the principle," that we take gold from a filthy place, and so on. Besides, common sense dictates that there is no merit in trying to re-invent the wheel in areas where others are years ahead of us. It is inconsistent, hence irrational, to take management wisdom from Stephen Covey, and advice from nondevotee experts on architecture, legal counsel, health, and so on, yet in the next breath criticize me for tapping other sources according to my interests, nature, and propensity. In this connection, Srila Prabhupada writes (SB.1.5.22 purport):

Human intellect is developed for advancement of learning in art, science, philosophy, physics, chemistry, psychology, economics, politics, etc. By culture of such knowledge the human society can attain perfection of life. This perfection of life culminates in the realization of the Supreme Being, Visnu.

When advancement of knowledge is applied in the service of the Lord, the whole process becomes absolute. The Personality of Godhead and His transcendental name, fame, glory, etc., are all nondifferent from Him. Therefore, all the sages and devotees of the Lord have recommended that the subject matter of art, science, philosophy, physics, chemistry, psychology and all other branches of knowledge should be wholly and solely applied in the service of the Lord.

Scientific knowledge engaged in the service of the Lord and all similar activities are all factually *hari-kirtana*, or glorification of the Lord.

When I read these lines I understand it to mean that not only can we use donations from persons in these fields but also their knowledge and wisdom. When directed to sense gratification, is a zero. The same knowledge, however, when directed to "the service of the Lord" by bringing out a clearer understanding of practical Krsna consciousness, is "factually *hari-kirtana*, or glorification of the Lord."

Therefore, a far better alternative to irrational arguments against using these things in devotional service is for us to divorce ourselves from irrational thinking, speaking, and acting

on all levels of our society. Let us become sober, rational men, men of integrity and of dignity, as Prabhupada asked us to be. Instead of demanding respect, let us command respect by displaying virtue and consistent character. Let us become men of integrity, who respect a self-evident truth no matter by whom and how it is presented. Let us refuse to accept fear and trembling as the genuine experience of Prabhupada's positive alternative socio-spiritual revolution. Let us have the integrity and courage to say "This is a fact," than be swayed by shallow rhetoric. Let us culture the conviction that we are servants of the truth, not just pay lip service to the idea. Let us make a concerted effort to give Srila Prabhupada what he wanted: Simple living and high thinking--not high talking, high living, and simplistic thinking. There is no magic or mysticism in achieving what I propose--it is purely a matter of desire followed by the required effort; it is simply a matter of relinquishing the desire to control outcomes, and instead live with a moral compass, attuned to our conscience. If we would commit to being such rational men and women, we may not have a need for a series like Our Mission. As long as we suffer from moral malnutrition, however, those who care deeply enough about the fate of Prabhupada's legacy have no choice but to speak out, for silence, as Camus said, would be immoral.

The GBC's denial about certain problems made this volume necessary to press home my concerns. I have no doubt that if the first volume failed to convince any reader of the severity of the problem of dysfunctional dynamics, that this volume will do the job. Dysfunctional dynamics can appear in all sorts of relationships--guru/disciple, authority/subordinate, husband/wife, parent/child, student/teacher, and even in routine social dealings. Hence this volume is vital reading for all devotees. Ultimately, my hope and prayer, is that this volume will motivate readers to refuse to participate in such dehumanizing behavior either as the perpetrator or the victim.

My hope is that it will do much more: That readers will be equipped with the eye to detect the symptoms of dysfunctional dynamics, with the language to define it, and discuss it, and realize that it can never be justified by reason or philosophy, and that "authority" and "Cooperate to show your love for Srila Prabhupada" are not valid justifications for it.

Studies have shown that by its very nature authoritarianism precludes any genuine attempt at rational discussion, which was my experience with my godbrothers on the GBC. The only apt response to it is rebellion, not in the sense of a violent overthrow--for that will only assure more of the same with a new set of faces in the old authoritarian roles--but in the form of a calm yet firm refusal to comply, because complying with it empowers it to continue.

About our dynamics, this must be kept in mind: *that refusal to participate in patterns of authoritarian dynamics does not call for a refusal to follow the process of Krsna consciousness*. To accept the process does not require us to accept sub-standard dynamics; and to reject bad dynamics does not require us to reject the process. I cannot stress this point enough.

Abandoning the process is never an option. Our Vaisnava doctrine is one thing, our dynamics are another. The former is flawless, but our application, to the degree that we are still touched by the modes of nature, can be flawed and result in bad dynamics. This distinction was made clear in Our Mission, in the chapter "Authoritarian and Humanitarian Dynamics."

Note also, that refusal to comply with dysfunctional dynamics naturally will make us more selective in choosing our association, for we cannot shed our illusions by participating in a system that is based on illusion itself. That would be like attempting to lift oneself by tugging on one's shoestrings. Hence greater discrimination about dynamics and in choosing our association may mean having to relocate so we can have better association for following the process. For many of us, that will require courage, especially if one is a householder, but courage (*abhayam*) is the first item on Krsna's list of divine qualities in Chapter Sixteen of *Bhagavad-gita*. Our commitment to Srila Prabhupada should be such that we achieve the

willingness to do whatever is favorable for the mission of Lord Caitanya. When we achieve that courage our success on this path is guaranteed.

It saddens my heart to see my godbrothers, whom I want to respect in every way, behave with less integrity than people I've known that have never chanted a round of *japa* in all their lives. It truly saddens me. Some of them I have known for decades and counted as my friends and at some stages they were even guides for me. When I see them engage in transparent verbal sleight of hand, out of attachment and personal ambition, I feel dismayed, let down, and my concern, worry, and fear for Prabhupada's mission only heightens.

However, the only tools I've received from Srila Prabhupada to grapple with the entwining of truth with illusion is preaching--specifically, encouraging others to distinguish reality from illusion, as mandated in the second verse of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Hence in *The Varieties of Dysfunctional Experience*, I offer the results of many months of research into group dynamics in the hope that Krsna and Srila Prabhupada empower me to empower my readers to see and to claim their right to a voice in the legacy given to us all by our Founder-Acarya.

Some say that my writing has "too much emotion." This is supposed to have the merit of disarming one. It is but another of our nonsensical conventions, rooted in impersonalism. I cannot imagine Srila Prabhupada or Srila Bhaktisiddhanta addressing the issues in our society without appropriate emotions--namely, anger, disgust, and indignation. As preachers in *parampara* I do not accept the notion that our predecessors have license in the preaching field that we don't have. These are the questions of real concern "Are the facts factual?" and "Is the analysis of said facts true to logic, common sense, and the *parampara* philosophy?"

This of course the reader is free to judge. Unless done by a corpse, there is no such thing as an impartial presentation, only a pretense of it, which can be as manipulative as emotionalism when used to manipulate the reader. In court, the jurors know where counsel for the defense stands and counsel for the state stand, because their summation is not done with cold impartiality, yet it is up to the jurors to decide among themselves how the evidence adds up. Finally, out of necessity, some of the key points from *Our Mission* are repeated in this volume, and some points are further developed. Still, for several reasons I recommend those who have not read *Our Mission* to get hold of a copy and read it. All readers wishing to pursue further discussion on any points are most welcome. Devotees are urged to write and publish their experiences in the Krsna consciousness movement. This would serve the mission of Mahaprabhu in two ways: in the long range, keep the movement's history from becoming mythical, and, in the short range, serve as a conscience to help the powerbrokers to sober up. Let us selflessly do the needful for Srila Prabhupada. Hare Krsna.

Servant of the servant of the servant of the Vaisnava's servant's servant,

Hare Krsna.

Kundali Dasa

Srila Prabhupada's Vyaspuja Centennial Day

6th. September, 1996

Sri Vrindavan Dhama

Chapter One - The Healing Process

Neurosis is always a substitute for legitimate suffering.
(Carl Jung)

There is a connection between the words organism and organization. Any organized system of interactions--family, community, nation--can be termed an organism. As such we can talk of it being healthy or diseased. Here "health" does not mean problem-free; it means the organization is accomplishing its primary goals. Conversely, "diseased" means not accomplishing its primary goal.

When we talk of dysfunctional dynamics we imply that there is an infection in the organizational organism, impeding it achieving its primary goal. To get rid of the disease, the organism has to heal, and, as in the case of an individual, organizational healing entails many considerations. First there must be a diagnosis. Our primary goal was discussed in the chapter by the same in *Our Mission*--in essence, to create a model Krsna conscious *varnasrama* society for the world. This automatically includes the goal of becoming Krsna conscious ourselves, because we can't model something unless we have it.

Interestingly, whereas, to a large degree the diagnosing of dysfunctional dynamics calls for looking at the group as an organism, as opposed to looking at the individual members; healing, to a large degree, calls for treating individuals. In the next volume in this *Our Mission* series, we shall focus on tools for diagnosing and in the fourth volume we shall address focus on enabling the individual within the group to upgrade his or her performance. The logic is that if the integrity of each member comprising the group is wholesome, Krsna conscious, then the integrity of the organization is likely to be high.

As a quick example of what sort of predictable patterns we face, consider the view of William James' in his most famous work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, wherein he generalizes about the historical development of religious institutions. An individual, Srila Prabhupada in our case, is divinely inspired and empowered and establishes an institution to make an organized attempt to propagate his teachings. Such religious geniuses spontaneously attract followers. This naturally develops into increased organization and formalization, and an ecclesiastical institution is born. When the founder disappears, in some cases, even before that happens, "the lust of dogmatic rule enters." Politics "contaminates the originally innocent thing." An institution, therefore, is a kind of necessary evil. The religious need it for like-minded association, but then it becomes an encumbrance as, inevitably, it becomes corrupt. We saw precisely this pattern unfold with the Gaudiya Math, but what steps have we taken to avoid it happening to us?

II

Before we go through the diagnosis and gauge the varieties of aberrant dynamics, the degree of infection, and the cure, it is important to grasp a couple of preliminary ideas about the nature of healing itself. Neuroses are benign mental disorders, characterized by a range of symptoms and incomplete insight, or none at all, into the nature of the underlying problem--some imbalance or suffering in our lives that we are unwilling to face. Inasmuch as individuals develop neuroses as a substitute for legitimate suffering, a group organism has its substitutes for legitimate growth pains, its neurotic mechanisms for evading the legitimate pain of problem-solving.

The current popular term for this is denial. Being in denial about some painful problem in our lives, we develop a neurotic symptom to compensate for it. Then the neurotic symptom itself

becomes a problem, and we often fall into denial about that too. Neurosis and denial can become a multi-layered mess. In the majority of cases, it takes a crisis to cause the neurotic individual to face the problem. Group organisms, being comprised of humans, tend to follow the same pattern.

For instance, an individual develops a drinking habit to make up for the fact that he hates his job, which he is in denial about. After some time it is clear to all concerned that he is hopelessly addicted to alcohol, but he denies it ardently. Generally, it takes a crisis--he smashes his car and injures a mother and baby--to get that person to face the problem and seek a solution.

Another preliminary idea: That it is especially important we appreciate that *the healing experience, whether of a physical or psychospiritual nature, often causes more pain and discomfort than the infection itself*. Lancing a boil, for example, squeezing out the pus, and disinfecting it with an astringent, is five or ten minutes of concentrated pain that is usually far more intense than just leaving the boil alone, but--and this is the pivotal point--the relief from the operation far surpasses the misery of leaving the boil alone. The ten minutes of pain is well worth it.

We all know this yet we prefer to tolerate it until it is unbearable, a crisis. Not until the choice comes down to losing our sanity or lancing the boil will we do the needful and seek treatment. In most cases, procrastination (*tamo-guna*) is preferred to pro-activity (*sattva-guna*).

As with individuals, waiting until a crisis appears before acting something is done about it, is also preferred in group dynamics. Since most humans have this tendency to put off the pain of problem-solving until it is urgent, we may say it is natural or normal. But normal does not always mean best or intelligent. A simple example will suffice to clarify this point. It is perfectly natural to defecate on ourselves. Nevertheless, we consider it part of maturing to overcome that normal tendency. Similarly, it may be normal to avoid the pain of problem-solving or healing, but it is growthful to overcome that tendency and to address problems the moment they enter conscious awareness.

This is the nature of problem-solving in the mode of goodness. We have to take the pain (poison) up front--then we can get the nectar. The hallmark of mode of passion solutions is that they are easier initially, but later on they become poison--more painful--because the lame measure or the attempt to sail around the problem only leads to a bigger problem, a crisis, further down the road.

In problem-solving, a group organism, like an individual, can be oriented toward procrastination (*tamo-guna*), the quick-fix solution (*rajo-guna*), or long-term solutions (*sattva-guna*). According to Lord Krsna, each of these give specific, predictable results, namely foolishness, poison, and nectar respectively. No doubt it would be best if we would have firm faith in the Lord's teachings and be steadfast in practicing the *sattvic* approach to problem-solving. We in ISKCON have tested again and again the Lord's teachings on the results of action in *tamas* and *rajas* in our approach to most of our problems down through the years.

From the above considerations, the author of *A World Waiting to be Born: Civility Rediscovered* has developed two interrelated guidelines for genuine realism in problem-solving, which facilitate the attaining and maintaining of a healthy group organism:

- (1) The capacity on both the individual and group level to distinguish between necessary, legitimate (healthy) suffering and that which is unnecessary or excessively convoluted.
- (2) The willingness to bear--to meet head-on and to work through--that suffering which is a proper portion in both our individual and collective lives.

These will not lead to a pain-free or problem-free institution, which is okay, because individual or organizational health does not pivot around a problem-free existence, but around *actively* and *effectively* addressing or healing our problems. Health is not the absence of disease; rather, it is the presence of the optimal healing process.

If we are to be a society functioning in *sattva-guna*, which is symptomized by neither creation or destruction, but by maintenance, if we are to become the positive alternative society that Prabhupada wanted us to establish, we have to develop an instinctive response to problem-solving. That means we must live by the above two guidelines. Health means to face necessary pain. Getting on a problem at our earliest opportunity must be our orientation. Srila Prabhupada expected us to function in this way.

As a footnote to the discussion of organizational health it is useful to consider that the term *healthy* or *normal* can be used in two ways. From the stance of a functioning group we can consider a person normal if he or she fulfills the social role expected in that group. That is a well-adapted person. From the stance of the individual, normal or healthy means the optimum growth and happiness of the individual.

Of the two viewpoints, it is possible to have the first without the second, because being well adapted is often achieved at the cost of giving up one's self in become the person we believe we ought to be. This socially normal person can be a very unhealthy individual. In emphasizing the individual's health, both goals--fulfilling a social role and optimal individual growth and happiness--coincide.

People who have worked at healing organizations understand all the above points up front, which we may summarize as follows:

1. The group may be looked at as an organism.
2. The principles of individual psychology can be applied to the group organism.
3. As with individuals, the tendency in a group is to be in denial about a neurosis, which is usually developed to compensate for some other problem (usually quite painful) that the individual or group is in denial about.
4. In most cases, crisis is the mechanism that shocks the individual or group out of denial and into healing; hence *crisis is the birthpains of new developments*.
5. Healing is often much more painful than the disease itself.
6. To attain and maintain a genuinely healthy state in the group organism, we need to live by these two guidelines: (1) The capacity on both the individual and group level to distinguish between necessary, legitimate (healthy) suffering and that which is unnecessary or excessively convoluted. (2) The willingness to bear--to meet head-on and to work through--that suffering which is a proper portion in both our individual and collective lives.
7. We need not bury our mistakes, but reflect on them minutely, perform

autopsies if you will, and learn from them.

8. The basic unit of the group organism is the individual, just as the single cell is the basic unit of the human organism. Attending to the individual growth and well-being (personalism) automatically fulfills the group's health and well-being; whereas attending to the organization's priorities (impersonalism) does not automatically ensure the individual's well-being.

In presenting this book I want to state my purpose by taking the liberty of rewording a passage from the aforementioned *A World Waiting to be Born: Civility Rediscovered*, which is full of prudent ideas for understanding and improving group dynamics:

My purpose is not to make ISKCON more pain free, but to assist the individual and thus the group organism to be healthier, happier, and more vitally alive. To that end, it is necessary that we become more conscious, not only of the varieties of dysfunctional dynamics, but of the nature of organizations as well. And realize that, unlike the superficial mode of passion solutions we use to smoothe ruffled feathers or solve problems, genuine personalism is a form of healing behavior that often demands painful honesty and the scalpel of candor.

Regarding the "scalpel of candor" it is necessary to devote a few paragraphs to the concept that the truth hurts, but it heals. We have compared the organizational organism to the individual, which is a very effective way to think of the group, but there is one important distinction between the two and it works to the disadvantage of organizational healing. As a group is made up of people, when there is a problem that needs healing, it is possible to focus on blaming rather than on the problem itself.

In individual healing, one does not blame one's fingers for having arthritis. In healing the group organism, however, it is typical that the department or division of the organism where the problem is concentrated gets blamed for the ailment. This creates a friends and enemies type division within the group organism and, as the saying goes, an organism divided against itself cannot heal. The blaming trap is difficult to avoid in organizational healing, however, because *the act of diagnosing itself may be perceived as laying of blame*.

The reason is simple. It is impossible to diagnose in the group organism without the person or persons behind the problem getting fingered, as we shall see. That's because just as in individual healing we must diagnose by thoroughly examining the ailing organ, so we cannot diagnose the group organism without thoroughly examining the infected part. The only positive attitude to have is to hold healing the group above all other considerations, by readily admitting the problem when the diagnosis exposes our contribution to the problem. Instead of allowing the diagnosis to polarize the group, thus creating a bigger problem, we can all see the situation as a growth opportunity for the group. Being "exposed" can be the birthpains of new developments. It all depends on our orientation.

In treating a boil, if one fails to cut the infected area and squeeze out the infection, perhaps for fear of the patient's rejection, one cannot be considered a merciful man. Similarly, despite the social rationalization and convention that organizational "dirty laundry should not be aired" the person fixed in attempting to heal the group organism has to transcend convention and air the laundry of the group organism, for such airing is the equivalent of squeezing out the infection. Trying to treat the problem yet hide the dirty laundry is like extracting the pus but leaving the core infection inside.

Those concerned about healing the group organism, therefore, must have the courage to be a truth-sayer. In our society, however, those whom truth-saying is likely to expose, along with

those too fearful to stand up for truth, like to say that truth-saying is offensive. They forget, conveniently, the adage that "The truth hurts but it heals." All our *acaryas* preached virtue, yet they were also truth-sayers. In this regard, Srila Prabhupada has explained the principle in *Bhagavad-gita* (10.4-5 purport):

Satyam, truthfulness, means that facts should be presented as they are, for the benefit of others. Facts should not be misrepresented. According to social conventions, it is said that one can speak the truth only when it is palatable to others. But that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straightforward way, so that others will understand actually what the facts are. If a man is a thief and if people are warned that he is a thief, that is truth. Although sometimes the truth is unpalatable, one should not refrain from speaking it. Truthfulness demands that the facts be presented as they are for the benefit of others. That is the definition of truth.

On another occasion Prabhupada made the point that the *satyam* is not always *priyam*. On yet another occasion, when Tamala Krsna Gosvami asked Srila Prabhupada about Srila Sridhara Maharaja's response to some criticism in a *Caitanya-caritamrta* purport, Prabhupada said, "He cannot make any comment. These are facts."

On this principle, in *The Varieties of Dysfunctional Experience*, in-depth analysis (surgery) of ailing sections of the group organism is performed and facts presented for the benefit of others. However, considering that surgery is impossible without bloodshed, those psychologically too delicate to withstand the sight of blood (or philosophically opposed to hard-headed realism) are forewarned that in this book the scalpel of candor makes some precise incisions, and the blood flows.

Future volumes will focus on suturing and convalescing.

Chapter Two - Why Emphasize Dynamics?

Studies prove that our childhood experiences influence us throughout life and Krsna consciousness supports this finding. Srila Prabhupada cited the Krsna conscious upbringing of Pahlada and Pariksit and his own childhood to show how the positive influences from our early years stay with us in later life. Freud, for example, found that our past experiences powerfully impact on our present performance, and that the more remote the past the more it influences us in the present. Last week's events generally have less impact on us today than our childhood. This influence applies with equal force to both positive and negative childhood experiences.

This may appear a ready explanation (and an excuse) for dysfunctional dynamics in ISKCON, several real-life examples of which are given throughout this book. We can blame it all on our childhood. Certainly childhood is a major factor; however, research has shown that the group dynamic also exerts a powerful influence on our behavior. Hence, even if we may not have dysfunctional traits that stem from our childhood we may still develop them as a result of the group character. The power of peer pressure is well-known. It is the basis for the stress in our philosophy for giving up *asat sanga* and seeking *sat sanga*.

Moreover, knowing the origin of a problem--whether in childhood or from group pressure--does not automatically lead to a solution. One has to apply oneself deliberately to the solution in order to change the conditioned pattern rooted in our childhood. As children we have little latitude to determine the dynamics we experience, but as adults we can take responsibility for our dynamics in two ways: (1) What we will accept as enacted upon ourselves and (2) what we will enact on others.

Group dynamics contribute significantly to the kind of person the religion produces. How and why its influence is so strong will be clear after five or six chapters of this book. By the end of the book there will be no doubts. The reader shall see that the group dynamic is a high priority and that the organization must accept responsibility for the dynamics it enacts. Bad dynamics can be a sin of commission, the result of deliberate effort or it can be a sin of omission, by neglecting to create the right Krsna conscious atmosphere in which the institution's members can grow into spiritual maturity, which is the reason we joined the Krsna consciousness movement. Just as atmosphere is vital to a restaurant's success, so it is intrinsic to the success of our Krsna consciousness movement.

If our dynamics put us in conflict with our conscience, with our innate sense of integrity, if they stifle rather than foster our capacity to expand our reasoning faculty, and our freedom to question and to receive answers without fear of reprisal; if we decrease rather than increase our sense of mutual respect, love, truth, and justice--in short, if we experience Krsna consciousness as disempowering rather than empowering--then we can only become enfeebled as human beings and imitation Vaisnavas. And once our critical thinking is stifled in some aspect of our lives, it spreads, crippling our intellectual development in all spheres.

Surely this is not meant to happen in the practice of Krsna consciousness. The legitimate experience of Krsna consciousness is not feelings of powerlessness, but feeling powerful or empowered. Arjuna started out in doubt and confusion, fear and trembling, but after hearing from Krsna he was transformed. He became asammoha, free from doubt and delusion; he was firm, fixed, free, and ready to fight. He was not hobbled. He did not lose his power by achieving Krsna consciousness; rather he gained it.

II

What is this losing and gaining power?

Whenever we give away our power to feel responsible for our lives to someone we believe more intelligent, more skilled, more holy than us, we take a risk. We make ourselves vulnerable. People do this with spouses, rock stars, sports stars, priests, politicians, the state, and institutions. We are often warned about giving away our power to individuals, but we are not warned about the many subtle ways we can be seduced into doing it. Furthermore, not many are aware that we can make the same transference of power to something impersonal like the state or an organization. The chapter "Alienation as Self-estrangement" is an eye-opening discussion on how the institution takes possession of the lives of the members--they end up serving the institution that was created to serve them--and, unfortunately, it is commonly assumed that either is equal to the other.

This situation is understood or assumed by some as the process of unconditional surrender to the spiritual master. We shall see from many angles of vision that such "surrender" to the spiritual master is a misconception; indeed it is detrimental from several points of analysis. The Chinese saying, "Give a hungry man a fish and he eats one meal. Teach him how to fish

and he eats for a lifetime" points us in the right direction of understanding the guru/disciple relationship. The guru teaches us to distinguish between reality and illusion. That's empowerment. When the guru distinguishes between reality and illusion for us, that's a form of deprivation, of disempowerment. It enfeebles us, because we are deprived from growing. The institutional guru-by-fiat that is really unqualified to be guru, rationalizes this deprivation as protection, but it is like the protection called "smother" love, in which a mother overprotects her child and enfeebles it from growing up to cope with reality.

The guru's business is to make the disciple as accomplished as himself in understanding and discharging devotional service, not to underscore the distance between himself and the disciple. If there is distance, awe, reverence, unconditional surrender, it should come voluntarily from the disciple's heart, out of real appreciation for the guru's imparting all the disciple is capable of receiving. When it results from institutional or peer pressure this can be psychologically scarring. Instead of growing in self-trust, self-realization, and becoming a self-actualized whole individual, one becomes estranged from self, from conscience, and one can end up in a worse state than when he or she came to devotional service. This is but one aspect of the disempowerment dynamic discussed in this book. Another aspect, more complex to discern, is when both the guru and disciple have given away their power to the institution, in effect becoming "possessed" by the institution. Then the guru becomes a mere functionary of the institution and, being in illusion himself, is really incapable of leading anyone out of illusion.

One yet to attain the flowering of his own powers of reason, cannot act primarily for the well-being of himself or his disciple. Such a guru is but an ordinary "organization man," a bureaucrat. Naturally he trains the disciple to be owned by the institution as well. All this comes about by having the wrong emphasis--that energy must flow from the individual to the institution instead of from the institution to the individual and leaving it largely up to the individual to reciprocate as per his or her level of appreciation.

The upshot is that those possessed by the institution think they think, but they do not think, because their "thinking" is dictated by and streamlined with the institution. Specifically, the bureaucratic ebb and flow dictates the extent to which we can think. When we speak of thinking here, however, the mere having of thoughts, the ongoing stream of consciousness we experience internally, is not what we mean. By "thinking" we mean the capacity to resist one of the most common phenomena encountered in groups--the giving up by the group members their capacity for ethical judgment to the group leaders, and the group leaders, as a sub-group giving up their judgment as well. Some psychiatrists call this "the regression to immaturity."

By "thinking" we mean, therefore, the capacity to think critically, analytically--and especially ethically--with no institutional restraint or social taboo. Indeed, we mean that such thinking, rather than being discouraged or tolerated, is positively encouraged at all levels of the institution. This Srila Prabhupada called "independent thoughtfulness." Bureaucracy, however, as we know instinctively, automatically works against this desirable aim. Hence Prabhupada's warning, "As soon as there is bureaucracy the whole thing is spoiled." In the course of this book we shall see the many, many ways in which this can happen.

III

Our philosophy places great emphasis on authority, and because the word authoritarianism is derived from authority, it may seem that Krsna consciousness sanctions authoritarian

dynamics. When we put this under the lamp of critical scrutiny, however, we find that the very opposite is true.

A person is "authority" who is transparent both in the message and in his exemplifying openness to questions, especially from his peers. (See Our Mission for a discussion of the importance of openness to challenge in a problem-solving approach to life). His mood should never be, I'm the authority, therefore you must do as I say and you'll make spiritual advancement. His mood should be, I am the authority and I'm here to clear away your doubts, whatever they may be, with logic and reason, to aid your spiritual advancement. Anything else is fertile ground for dysfunctional dynamics to sprout.

An authority in the true spiritual sense is not necessarily one appointed by the institutional hierarchy. Whoever is a transparent via medium for the parampara is an authority, regardless of the institution's view. Srila Prabhupada's life in relation to his guru's institution proves this. Therefore, Srila Prabhupada wrote, "Nothing should be accepted blindly. Everything should be accepted with care and with caution." This stance reflects the true atmosphere of Krsna consciousness, which is sober, rational, and generally relaxed, anxiety-free, which was typical of Srila Prabhupada's association.

The successors to Srila Prabhupada, having the topmost administrative roles in the society, have a responsibility to attend to the dynamics, firstly by setting a consistent example of rational dealings, then by enlightening and reminding the mass of devotees about this aspect, so that everyone is conscious of how they contribute to the overall atmosphere of the society.

My contention is that rampant disregard for this important aspect of Krsna consciousness is making the society a closed one, in which irrational or dysfunctional dynamics prevail. Authoritarianism makes our society unattractive and unlivable for member who realize that they are getting mentally hobbled by the dynamics. Further, the society is unattractive to intelligent persons who pick up on the irrational dynamics underlying all the well-reasoned presentation of the philosophy. This deters them from joining the movement or contributing fully to the mission.

We may think it is their misfortune that they could not take to Krsna consciousness and go back to Godhead, but as hinted in the Introduction, it is highly questionable whether anyone caught in the downward spiral of the authoritarian dynamic--whether the perpetrator or the victim--is a suitable candidate for achieving genuine Krsna consciousness. If we have dysfunctional dynamics, then our hope of going beyond birth and death is nothing but a fantasy. This will become more apparent as we go along. IV To illustrate how Srila Prabhupada viewed dynamics, I'll tell a true story. In the period from the latter half of 1973 to the first half of 1975, in the old Henry Street temple, we had two devotees that had gone off the rails. Nothing unusual about that. It happens. In war there must be casualties. Unfortunately, the two devotees were the GBC man, a former *sannyasi*, and his wife. They did not come clean about their fall. They held up a front and remained as "authorities" in the temple/zone for two whole years. During that time the dynamics in the temple were oppressive. Many devotees left the temple to go elsewhere in ISKCON. Many left the path altogether.

When the corruption came to light, more devotees fled. There were bewildered faces all over the temple and several devotees changed their service because of the revelations of corruption. Eventually Srila Prabhupada came to the temple and preached and encouraged the devotees. He gave us a new life, so to speak. His secretary during that visit was the former

sannyasi Brahmananda prabhu. It just so happened that a few months later, I was in Vrndavana and Brahmananda was still Prabhupada's servant and I became Brahmananda Maharaja's servant. One day we got to talking about events in New York. I asked him what Prabhupada had said about the crisis in New York. This is how I remember the relevant part of our conversation.

Brahmananda said, "I asked Prabhupada if the devotees that left were insincere. He said, 'No, but if you want to attract flies you have to make the thing sweet.'" Then Prabhupada added, "Senior devotees like Jayadvaita and Gopijanaballabha should have said something."

V

From this we understand two things: (1) That our dynamics are very important, because even very sincere devotees will not be able to stay if we don't make the atmosphere sweet. By "sweet" he does not mean mushy; he means positive, growthful, dynamic. (2) The senior devotees have a responsibility to Prabhupada and the devotees to speak up when things go off the track. In fact any devotee has such a civic responsibility if he or she knows facts. But it especially falls on the senior devotees, because presumably they have keener powers of discriminating between Krsna consciousness and maya. Hence a flippant or belligerent response to their disquiet is hardly appropriate.

No matter how lofty our intentions, the potential to mess up is high, as Kay Porterfield, author of *Blind Faith: Recognizing and Recovering From Dysfunctional Religious Groups*, explains:

Religious organizations, no matter how holy their purpose, are not perfect. They are all composed of flesh and blood people, complete with very human flaws and aspirations. Regardless of the truth inherent in a group's teachings, its dynamics can go awry. Even though clergy, lay leaders, and members sincerely aspire to serve God, any group has the potential to become spiritually abusive--from the Lutheran Ladies' Sewing Circle to the New Age past-life regression group advertised in the newspaper.

The history of ISKCON supports Porterfield's observation. Our dynamics have gone awry in the past and it could happen again. It could be happening right now. Hence the atmosphere that prevails in our society is everyone's responsibility. Although some unfortunate persons might endure third-rate dynamics, our having a great philosophy is not sufficient to keep most people in a mentally unhealthy situation. Sooner or later they break out. Some break out bitter and seek to even the score in the court.

Enlightened leadership welcomes observations or suggestions from senior members of the society by soberly and empathetically hearing, considering, then investigating if necessary. Of course, requires an investment of time. But problem-solving takes time. And the primary business of institutional leadership is problem-solving, not avoiding the challenges to create an artificial peace. Here is Srila Prabhupada talking about problem-solving (Hamburg 1969):

The rabbits, when they face one danger it understands that "Now my life is in danger." He closes his eyes. He thinks that the problem is now solved. And peacefully he is killed. Similarly, the problems are there, but we are closing our eyes. "Oh, there is no problem. We are very happy." So this is called maya. The problem is not solved, but they are thinking their problem is solved by closing the eyes.

The worst leaders do nothing at all; bad leaders wait for a crisis; and the best leaders always try to nip problems before they bloom. They know that a healthy organization is not one that is problem free, but one continually addressing its problems at first notice.

Devotees deserve a responsive hearing of their problems and complaints. To lead is to serve and it is by feedback that we do a better job of leading. As soon as leadership sends a signal that it is taboo to question, to disagree, to express concern, and, if necessary, to speak out, we have stumbled onto the minefield of dysfunctional dynamics--specifically a species of impersonalism, in which persons are treated as things. On the path of *bhakti*, treating persons as "things," whether done wittingly or unwittingly, is offensive. It is evil.

Further, it reveals the perpetrator to be a *kanistha bhakta*, if a *bhakta* at all, because one hallmark sign of spiritual advancement is the consistent display of personal consideration for everyone, not just disciples or potential disciples. Indeed, an advanced devotee is personal towards all living beings. To be "advanced" and yet incapable of practicing such personalism is a bluff, cheating. It means that the emperor has no clothes.

VI

As we shall see, authoritarianism, which is manifestly impersonal, runs counter to our ideal of personalism. My concern, therefore, is this: Can we achieve personalism by practicing impersonalism? The answer has to be no. It is not any more feasible to achieve personalism by practicing impersonalism than it is possible to learn swimming by practicing cooking. This singular consideration is all the motivation we need to attend to our dynamics.

By the wrong dynamics we achieve the very opposite of what we set out to realize: Instead of us growing to full realization of courage, generosity, openness, a firm disinclination to exploit others, freedom from doubt and delusion, and a capacity to touch others' lives and to open them, we produce a shrinking back upon ourselves, a crushing of the human spirit, we produce fear and trembling, and humiliation misconstrued as humility. We produce the fully automated organization man, out of touch with his own self and out of touch with others. Rather than empowering each other, we disempower. In short, we get the most insidious form of maya: *the illusion of progress out of illusion*.

Freeing ourselves from this particular illusion is an arduous task. We cannot console ourselves by simply blowing on the boil. Either we lance it and squeeze, or remain deluded and bluff, cheat, swindle. However, Lord Caitanya wants *para upakara* not swindle.

Many symptoms of our dysfunctional group dynamics are discussed herein with the aim to raise our awareness of this problem. I include symptoms that I have personally experienced, and, I have sometimes practiced myself. I also include those symptoms I recognize from discussions with devotees about their experiences. It is possible, therefore, that there are symptoms you have experienced that are not mentioned here. However the specific kind of dysfunctional behavior you may be caught in is not so important. More important thing is to recognize that it is dysfunctional or crazy-making, and then to address the problem or get out of the situation, because your sanity is your most precious asset for becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious.

In researching this subject, I came across lots of material from anti-cult literature that apply to us. If we attend to their valid criticisms of our dynamics, we can minimize the possibility of lawsuits against the society. In a group or an individual, the healthy and rational response to criticism is self-examination. The anti-cult people can actually serve our cause by calling to our attention the areas in which we are slipping from personalism to impersonalism. In the sense that it can aid in improving our performance, those who criticize us are our friends. A devotee learns to see everything as impetus to progress, to growth, to self-improvement.

Chapter Three - Dysfunctional Authority: A Study

Our society has already proven itself prone to many forms of human flaws, from abuse of authority, to child abuse, to embezzling money, to highly placed leaders getting side-tracked, to murder and more. As the quote from Sol Stein says on the back cover "The truth is that adultery, theft, hypocrisy, envy, and boredom are all sins practiced everywhere that human nature thrives." Human nature thrives in ISKCON.

Despite our idealism, therefore, it is unintelligent to assume our community above any kind of human flaw. Our thinking should be like town planners, who, knowing what to expect wherever human nature thrives, include a jail in the town design. We should think, "Dysfunctional dealings are possible, therefore best to be on the lookout for them as we are always potentially capable of manifesting some kind of aberration." Such realism does not work against love and trust. It fosters it. As Prabhupada used to say, "A lock (on a safe) keeps an honest person honest."

To show how easily human nature can become irrational I have included the highlights of an experiment done in Stanford University that shows the ease with which we humans can abuse authority. The purpose of the study was to find out why prison life can be so dehumanizing. Of course, ISKCON is not a prison so the discussion may seem irrelevant. That is only superficial, however, because what was learned about human behavior from this study has significance for all types of institutions, for it shows what peers can do to each other when even pretend "authority" is conferred to some.

There are parallels between ISKCON and a prison: Both are institutions in which "authority" is emphasized and in both the working assumption is that wavemaking is not to be tolerated or reasoned with; although this assumption is not necessarily accurate. The dynamics, however, flow from this assumption. Thus the fact that the experiment was done to understand the dynamics of prison life is not significant. The significant thing was the lesson about institutional dynamics. By the end, therefore, we'll see that the conductor of the experiment considered that his findings revealed the power of kinds of "social, institutional forces to make most men engage in evil deeds." We'll see that thinking "It could be happening to us" is the wisest outlook.

I quote verbatim (in italics) the main part of this interesting and worrisome experiment as it appeared in *Mindwatching* 1), by Hans and Michael Eysenck. The numbers in parentheses correspond to the numbered extracts with remarks which follow in the next chapter:

Philip Zimbardo and his co-workers at Stanford University were interested in determining the causes of the dehumanization that is so prevalent in prisons. Suppose the ordinary members of society were persuaded to act as guards and prisoners in a mock prison which mimicked the environment and day-to-day running of the actual prison? If the mock prison failed to produce the hostility and alienation of a real prison, this would surely suggest that the personality characteristics of the guards or the prisoners, or both, are the vital ingredients in the unpleasantness found in a real prison. On the other hand, if the behaviour observed in the mock prison was very similar to that in a real prison, this would suggest that it is the environment of a prison which is the crucial factor in producing unpleasantness.

The experiment started on August 14, 1971, in Palo Alto, California. The quiet Sunday morning was shattered by a screeching squad car siren as police swept through the city picking up the participating college students from their homes in a surprise "mass arrest". All of the "suspects" were charged with a felony, (1) warned of their constitutional rights, spread-eagled against the police car, searched, handcuffed, and taken away in the back seat of the police car to the police station. The whole operation was carried out so realistically, thanks to the cooperation of the Palo Alto City Police Department, that the alarmed mother of one 18-year-old student arrested for armed robbery exclaimed: "I felt my son must have done something: the police have come to get my son!"

On arrival at the police station, each suspect was fingerprinted and identification forms were prepared for his "jacket" or central information file. He was then left on his own in a detention cell. Later in the day, each suspect was blindfolded and taken to the "Stanford County Prison", where he was stripped naked, skin-searched, deloused, and issued with a uniform, bedding, and basic supplies. The uniform worn by the prisoners consisted of a loose-fitting muslin smock with an identity number on the front and back, no underclothes, a light chain and lock around one ankle, rubber sandals, and a cap made from a nylon stocking.

The prison warden gathered the prisoners together, and told them about the 16 basic rules of prisoner conduct, starting with "Prisoners must address the guards as 'Mr. Correctional Officer', and ending with 'Failure to obey any of the above rules may result in punishment'."

The "guards" had been told beforehand that their task was to "maintain the reasonable degree of order within the prison necessary for its effective functioning". They were given (2) only minimal guidance about the way they were expected to behave, except that (3) they were specifically prohibited from using physical aggression. They were clearly distinguishable from the prisoners by their (4) uniform, which consisted of plain khaki shirts and trousers, a whistle, a police nightstick, and reflecting sunglasses.

The guards and prisoners were selected from among a total of 75 respondents to a newspaper advertisement asking for male volunteers to participate in a psychological study of "prison life" for 15 dollars a day over a period of two weeks. (5) The 10 prisoners and 11 guards who actually took part in the experiment were among those respondents judged to be the most stable (physically and mentally), the most mature, and (6) the least inclined towards anti-social behavior. In fact the majority of them were middle-class students.

The prisoners and guards were to live within the confines of the "Stanford County Prison", which was situated in the basement of the psychology building at Stanford University. (7) This mock prison was deliberately designed to be as unpleasant as possible. There were three small cells (9ft. by 6ft., with three prisoners assigned to each. As in a real prison, (8) the windows were barred, and in addition to guards there was a warden, a superintendent (Zimbardo), a parole board, and a grievance committee. All participants had agreed to take part in spite of having been told that those assigned to play the prisoner role

could expect to be (9) under surveillance, (10) might be harassed, and might have (11) some of their basic rights curtailed during imprisonment.

The happenings within the mock prison were so unpleasant and potentially so dangerous that the entire experiment had to be brought to a premature end after six days rather than the scheduled fourteen. Violence and rebellion broke out within less than two days of the start of the experiment. The prisoners ripped off their clothing and their identity numbers, shouted and cursed at the guards, and barricaded themselves inside the cells. The guards put down the rebellion violently, using fire extinguishers, (12) transformed the prisoners' "rights" into "privileges", (13) played the prisoners off against one another and systematically harassed them. (14) One of the prisoners showed such severe symptoms of emotional disturbance (disorganized thinking, uncontrollable crying and screaming), after only one day he had to be released.

(15) On the third day a rumor spread through the "prison" about a mass escape plot. This led the superintendent and the guards to take various repressive and preventative steps. On the fourth day, two more prisoners displayed symptoms of severe emotional disturbance and were released: a third developed a psychosomatic rash all over the body and was also released. As time passed, (16) some of the guards seemed to derive great satisfaction from exercising power and behaving in a sadistic manner. (17) A particularly interesting observation was that the use of force, harassment, and aggression by the guards increased steadily from day to day, in spite of the fact that prisoner resistance declined as time went by. The guards also manifested more indirect displays of power as time went by, such as rapping their sticks against their hands or against the furniture, walking with a swagger, or adopting extravagant postures. The prisoners, on the other hand, (18) began to slouch and keep their eyes fixed on the ground.

What seems to have led to the experiment being abandoned was a comment made by Christina Maslach, Zimbardo's fiancée. She had gone to the prison to help interview the prisoners. While she was there she saw a line of blindfolded prisoners shuffling along under guard to the toilet. Miss Maslach burst into tears and exclaimed, "It's awful what you are doing to those boys!" Naturally, Philip Zimbardo's heart melted at these words, and the experiment was officially halted the next morning.

(19) Perhaps the most vivid accounts of what it was like to take part in such dehumanizing experience were the diary entries of those directly involved. (20) Before the experiment one of the guards wrote in his diary that he was a pacifist and so unaggressive that he could not imagine maltreating any other living being. By the third day, he appeared to be thoroughly enjoying the power to manipulate people. (21) Before the prisoners received visitors, he warned them not to complain unless they wanted the visit to come to an abrupt end. (22) What he really liked, he said, was having almost total control over everything that was said and done.

(23) On the fifth day, problems arose because a new prisoner refused to eat his sausage. The guard's diary at this point reads as follows: "We throw him into the Hole ordering him to hold sausages in each hand. . . We decide to play

upon prisoner solidarity and tell the new one that all the others will be deprived of visitors if he does not eat his dinner. . . I walk by and slam my stick into the Hole door . . . I am very angry at this prisoner for causing discomfort and trouble for the others. I decided to force-feed him, but he wouldn't eat. I let the food slide down his face. . . (24) I hated myself for making him eat but I hated him more for not eating."

As we have already noted, the guards became increasingly brutal and aggressive during the course of the experiment, and ignored the warning not to use physical force. However, Zimbardo and his colleagues reported that there were differences in behavior among the guards, and (25) only about a third of the guards, they felt, were so consistently hostile and degrading to be described as sadistic.

On the other hand, (26) the prisoners became progressively more passive as the days passed, and sank into a state of depression and helplessness. (27) Perhaps the reason for this was that they began to realize there was very little they could do to improve matters or control the environment. As the old saying goes, "There's no point in banging your head against a brick wall."

(28) Despite its premature end Zimbardo's experiment showed that brutal, ugly prison situations can develop even when upright citizens play the parts of the prisoners and guards. (28) The dehumanization which occurred in the Stanford experiment could hardly be attributed to the "deviant personalities" of those involved; the most natural explanation was that it was the prison environment which was mainly responsible for the participants' behavior. In Zimbardo's own words, his study revealed "the power of social, institutional forces to make most men engage in evil deeds."

But how similar was the mock prison to a real prison? The evidence from those with first-hand experience of real prison is somewhat mixed. Prisoners in the maximum security wing of Rhode Island Penitentiary said that they recognized the reactions of the mock prisoners as corresponding to the confused and over-emotional reactions of many first offenders. (31) A remark by one ex-convict throws some light on the passivity of the mock prisoners: "The only way to really make it with the bosses (in Texas prisons) is to withdraw into yourself, both physically and mentally--literally making yourself as small as possible. It's another way to dehumanize you. They want you to make no waves in prison."

Before going on to discuss the numbered points, some general remarks and observations are in order. Many in ISKCON have conditioned ourselves to reject out of hand everything from the nondevotees. In reality there is both a rational application and an irrational application of this practice. Just as it is wrong to blindly accept, it is also wrong to blindly reject. To a Vaisnava, utility is the principle, therefore the *Bhagavatam* even quotes a prostitute whom Krsnadas Kaviraja repeats to establish the highest point in our philosophy--that separation is the ultimate ecstasy.

Yet the temptation to reject is strong. We are a highly idealistic group. We want to believe in the power of Krsna consciousness so much we think, prematurely, that we have risen far beyond human error and failings, despite the data that contradicts this almost daily in our

communities. We even twist our intelligence to deny our perceptions. Therefore, we invariably must have a crisis before we act to solve problems which could have been prevented had we been more realistic, commonsensical, and decisive.

A simple example: We have had in our society men who blatantly display virtually no Vaisnava symptoms in that they were impersonal, ruthless, political, duplicitous, and crazy-making to associate with and to serve. In short they were blatantly irrational, but because they were "enthusiastic about preaching" or some other ISKCON sacred cow, we worshiped and venerated these people, gave them all facility, when we should have neglected them for their own good and the integrity of our society. Instead of facing reality, we failed to act "without hesitancy" in response to the situation that was clearly a disaster in the making. Then as surely as night follows day, we got disaster after disaster.

Yet, as Jagadish pointed out in his second letter after quitting his *sannyasa* and guru roles, we do not accept responsibility for our failures, though we readily take credit for our successes. This is surely dysfunctional. Even more dysfunctional is that many have no compunction about taking credit for another's success.

The phenomenon of us cuddling the irrational and elevating them to institutional and spiritual heights is not a thing of the past. We still have such "devotees" in our midst; and, despite history's lessons, we are still being unrealistic about situations staring us in the face. We are in denial to the extent that we rather push a person out of the society for trying to bring the issues to our attention. Politically, this maneuver can perhaps be successful, but spiritually, it simply shows how seriously unhealthy the group organism has become.

Referring to the experiment, I recognize that in my tenure in ISKCON I have played both the prisoner and the guard and I deeply regret having been in these roles. I hope that with the kind grace of Krsna I will never be so alienated from myself as to make the same mistake again. This mistake is especially possible when we are in one of the several middle levels in the authoritarian hierarchy. Then we may develop a sado-masochistic relationship with the world, i.e. dominating those under us and being submissive to those above us, in an effort to please and to move ahead in the hierarchy.

From my experience I can testify that one becomes twisted inside, lost to oneself and filled with self-loathing. Ironically, self-contempt causes one to dominate one's dependents with more vigor, as one of the guards admitted to in the above account. This is the opposite of self-realization.

History has shown that our devotees are not on the platform of flawless behavior and character, not above the modes of nature, but are really very, very conditioned souls struggling to rise out of the morass. Yet we seem to insist on working stupid instead of working smart; instead of applying ourselves to solving the problems in the most sattvic way, we either make quick-fix solutions that are nectar at first but poison in the end (raja-guna), or we ignore them, pleading a dependency on divine intervention (tama-guna). But God already has intervened, by giving us knowledge in parampara. Now it is up to us to know truth from illusion and to live in truth, by applying ourselves. *We cannot get out of illusion and not face reality at the same time.* Arjuna tried this but Krsna rejected it. He said it was unbecoming of a man who knows the progressive values of life to be cripple-minded.

Not wanting to confront unpleasant truths about our human flaws--both as individuals and as a group--we tend to compensate with an irrational damning of useful information that comes from nondevotees. In this way, we toss out the baby and end up with bathwater. This tendency to regress to immaturity or irrationality is a major problem in group dynamics and worthy of deep study.

If we would trade our idealism in exchange for realism for the duration of reading *Listen, Little Prabhu!* we'll see that it would be irrational to reject the findings of this experiment, as well as the wealth of information throughout, for the implications herein are not irrelevant to us merely because "we are devotees." Indeed, it is highly debatable whether or not we are

devotees in the strict sense of the term, based on our character and conduct, but that is too broad to address here. Hopefully we will have both the text and Sanatana Gosvami's commentary on *Brhad-Bhagavatamrta* and then we can decide where we fall in the relative scheme of who is what kind of devotee.

Rather than think, therefore, that the implications of Zimbardo's six day excursion to hell is irrelevant to us, we should consider that it sheds light on the possibility that similar abuses go on in our ISKCON, under the rationalization that it is for Krsna and Srila Prabhupada. An experiment revealing what tested "normal" citizens can do to each other in a few days, because of having a little temporary mundane power, is cause for us to try and imagine what can happen over a period of several years in the cases of our "normal" men that were never tested yet believe they have divine power. This is a very serious concern that we need to face. No devotees should have it on their conscience that they are participating in a whittled down version of a criminal state.

And we don't have to imagine all of it. As already noted, in the movement's short history we have seen "devotees" perform virtually every sort of conscienceless act we know. Some have a reputation for their repeated transgressions of common decency. We know that we had to have reform in ISKCON once already because of abuses perpetrated by the top leaders onto the heads of their godbrothers back in the days of the Zonal Acarya blunder. We know that Gopijanaballabha and others committed or attempted suicide because of our crazy-making dynamics. We have no reason to believe there will not be more in the future; however, we deny responsibility for any of these outcomes.

We blithely lay the blame at the feet of the victims, saying that "In war there will be casualties." But when are we going to self-examine as a society and see what was our role in dysfunctional events and act decisively to avoid it happening again? When are we going to ask ourselves, "Are these casualties from friendly fire or from encounters with the enemy?" We would be fools to ignore the signs that the institution should be more self-examining. If a little power can go to heads in a matter of two days, it is unimaginable what absolute power can do.

And ISKCON is not the only source to draw our lessons from. We know that some of Prabhupada's godbrothers gave him a raw deal in some of their centers before he came to the West. We know that later on some tried to steal his disciples and many would not even acknowledge his accomplishments. Why assume that all these flawed dealings are past when experience tells us that history simply repeats itself.

Others who have experiences of abuses of their basic human rights should also write books, because *open discussion of the abuses of power is the best safeguard against it recurring*. I can't abuse your human rights and expect you to pawn it off as divine or cooperating for Srila Prabhupada if I know that you know that such abuse by any other name is still abuse. My ruse only works as long as you think it to be a virtue, rather than what it really is.

Chapter Four - On Pondering Zimbardo's Hell

Turning to the numbered points in the previous chapter we shall see how they have parallels within our everyday ISKCON:

(1) *warned of their constitutional rights*: This is something we don't have in ISKCON. We in ISKCON, the organization of the most civilized people on the planet, the positive alternative society, are "citizens" of a country in which (at the time of this writing) the ordinary citizens

ultimately have no rights. We are supposed to be sincere devotees who show our love for Srila Prabhupada by cooperating, which means blindly follow. Now a constitution is supposed to be in the works, but it is a sad comment on the *rajas-tamas* nature of our society that it has taken us 30 years to get around to this vital need.

In the authoritarian set up, the constitution is framed to protect the institution, which means those in power. Sociologists and lawmakers say, however, that the main function of the constitution should be to protect the individual from abuses of power. It must guarantee due process. Is this wisdom being factored into our constitution under development?

Assuming such a constitution does materialize and a mechanism to enforce it is created, if that system becomes a highly politicized program, like so many other aspects of our society, we will end up with rich justice and poor justice, which we already have, and that will be just another disappointment. The idea of a constitution, therefore, should not be a pacification measure, a gimmick. It must confer on us real rights and privileges. With my years of experience in the society, I'm skeptical that this will happen. In our version of spiritual communism, everybody is equal, but some are more equal than others. Or as a unhappy godbrother once scrawled on a building in Europe: "All for one and none for all."

(2) *only minimal guidance about the way they were expected to behave*: Unlike Zimbardo's guards, Prabhupada gave us several practical guidelines in his letters and books for how the society should function, how the individual devotees should behave, and how Krsna conscious leaders should behave. Besides that, we have the philosophy of personalism to guide us. That alone should be all we need. If we would only follow a few basic directives, then all the others will follow.

Some fundamental guidelines Prabhupada gave for leaders were persuasion instead of force; command respect and not demand it; teach by example; older devotees should take care of the younger devotees and not just attend to the new uninitiated; leaders should manage themselves out of their service by training others to replace them; and don't drive members away.

Little of this is applied. If, however, we would simply care for people and not be impersonal, that would go a long way to alleviating the situation. But we always follow the line of least resistance, which is the line *rajo-guna* always offers us. But, as human potential guru Anthony Robbins likes to point out, in life, as long as we keep doing what we always did we will keep getting the results that we always got. It doesn't take rocket scientists to tell us that. Look at the condition of ISKCON in the USA as described by Dayananda prabhu in 1995 in the ISKCON publication, *Prabhupadanuga*:

In the United States especially, there's been a decline of membership in the organization. The temples are struggling to maintain themselves... There's been too much emphasis on the organization. But we need balance... We don't have to depend on the organization for *sadhu-sanga*, or to chant our rounds for us. The organization can certainly provide a tremendous preaching vehicle. But in the ultimate issue, preaching depends on individuals. They could be within the structure of an organization, or they could be outside an organization. And I don't think that ISKCON is limited to an organization. I think ISKCON includes and goes far beyond structure... The purpose is not to increase the membership of the organization. The purpose is to bring people to Krsna consciousness...

Know for certain that our dynamics that led to this condition is sure to give us what we always got. If actions speak louder than words the message we send is that our purpose is to attract people and then chase them away if they will not agree to being "thinged."

(3) *they were specifically prohibited from using physical aggression*: This is not such a big problem in the leadership of ISKCON. Physical aggression undertaken by a high-up leader is rare. At least, some get their disciples to do it and can claim deniability. An excellent example of how this works is seen in the chapter "A Knock 'em Dead Lecture" in which the guru is inciting the passion of his disciples to cut out the tongues and kill all who "blaspheme" the guru, namely himself. This is thinly veiled as a presentation of the philosophy complete with a disclaimer, "I don't say, the sastra says it." It is more on the domestic level that physical abuse is a problem. With all the prominence physical abuse gets in the media, it is often overlooked that psychological abuse can be more dehumanizing and damaging--and ultimately a far greater problem. What we have in psychological aggression more than makes up for any absence of physical aggression. This will become clear in later chapters. Psychological aggression is the mainstay of authoritarian dynamics. It diminishes the individual by causing the intelligence of the victim to atrophy. What could be a more heinous crime against a man than to kill him yet keep him alive?

(4) *uniform, which consisted of plain khaki shirts and trousers, a whistle*: We have our equivalent symbols of office-- *sannyasa* and other titles, *dandas*, informants too, and reflecting sunglasses as well. The institutional conditioning is such that we learn to respect the symbols of the ruling class rather than judge each on personal merit. Intellectually one may know it stinks, but the social pressure to conform is difficult to resist.

(5) *The 10 prisoners and 11 guards who actually took part in the experiment were among those respondents judged to be the most stable (physically and mentally), the most mature*: We don't have this assurance about our recruits. We gladly accept neurotics, psychotics, and the character disordered. In one temple we even shaved-up a spastic case, such is our sentimentality and enthusiasm for recruiting, as long as he or she can cut the profile sufficiently to live among us. Clinical research shows, however, that the socially functional, yet deranged, can be a more cancerous menace to society than the completely deranged, who generally get put away. It is possible that deranged persons can be so disguised that we accept them as advanced devotees. This subject will be explored in a future volume.

We call our minimal discrimination in recruiting "being merciful." Consequently, how can we ourselves anywhere near to recruiting the physically and mentally stable? And once these less qualified people become the majority, they will define to the rest of us what is advanced devotional service, definitions that are whimsical, or superficially *sastric*, and certainly devoid of mature realization. Thus a dedicated follower of the *parampara* has to face a decision--either quit, compromise, face persecution, or foment rebellion.

One likely response to my objection about how we recruit just for the body count is "But devotees are the most intelligent people, prabhu." Yes, devotees are the most intelligent people, so we must *become* devotees by being intelligent. Not that "I'm a devotee therefore I'm intelligent." This kind of hard-headed realism is, unfortunately, unwelcome.

We use the philosophy to opiate our intelligence. And we say nonsense like, "I'm not into Krsna consciousness from the head, prabhu; I'm into the heart." We say, "Don't discriminate about others. Discriminating is risky. You'll make *Vaisnava-aparadha*. Accept the chaos and irrationality as Krsna's mercy. Just try to improve yourself. Don't fault-find." We say, "Who am I to judge? I have problems myself. "

Translation: "Deny your perceptions. Whatever you see that does not make sense, is really some fault in yourself. (The assumption must be that ISKCON is flawless). You have four defects and so your intelligence is zero. However, discriminating in which you lay blame on yourself, justifiably or not, is perfect. Discriminating in other ways is really your excuse to

fault-find." "Don't criticize the devotees," we say--meaning, close your eyes, stunt your intellect, don't take a realistic look around you and see the inconsistency between the character and performance of those around you and the model described in the *sastras*. Even if you do, say nothing. Of course, those above you have all right to take you to task for your shortcomings. One-sided dealing in ISKCON is perfectly normal.

The result of our impractical ways is that people find themselves in conflict with their conscience and their integrity compromised. When find it difficult to ignore our perceptions, we begin doubting our own sincerity. For those of us lacking a strong sense of identity, we conform to the dysfunctional system in order to fit in ("If you can't lick 'em, join 'em"). Before long we are enacting the same abusive or irrational dealings on others, because we become innured to our conscience, alienated from ourselves.

The functioning dysfunctional person who joins our movement, can do book distribution or fund-raising and make a meteoric rise through our hierarchy. Before long he'll have others under him to be victims of his crazy-making routines; and they, having been fed a disempowering interpretation of the philosophy, will accept humiliation in the name of humility. They will permit this dehumanizing of themselves in the belief that they are surrendering on the path of spiritual life and cooperating to please Srila Prabhupada. All this happens because we are indiscriminate in recruiting members, as if bhakti--the topmost process--needs no qualifications, but lesser paths do.

What reasonably mentally healthy person will go along with such a program? Research says none. Birds of a dysfunctional feather tend to flock together. So if my thesis is right--that we have a prevalence of irrationality in ISKCON--our hope of attracting intelligent people to Krsna consciousness is a fantasy. We may attract them, because Prabhupada's books are definitely rational, powerful, and appealing to the intelligent class, but we won't keep them. Even with eternal salvation on one end of the scale, no intelligent person will trade their sanity for it. A whiff of our dynamics has a repelling effect on intelligent people akin to a whiff of a skunk. But the dysfunctional have no problem, being in their element.

(6) *the least inclined towards anti-social behavior. In fact the majority of them were middle-class students:* We cannot claim our members to be "the least inclined towards anti-social behavior." To some extent, just to join ISKCON shows an inclination to anti-social behavior. We know that ISKCON was formed in the hippie era, when being anti-social or irresponsible was the way to be. Some of us want to escape from the freedom to take responsibility for our lives and come to our own decisions about the data confronting us. Yet we fancy ourselves as *brahmanas*, men of knowledge and wisdom. It is a profoundly mysterious thing to see people ostensibly on the path of shedding illusion, yet doggedly determined not to face reality, by living in a bubble of illusion.

(7) *This mock prison was deliberately designed to be as unpleasant as possible:* Many of our *asramas* would qualify both from the point of view of the physical conditions and the psychic atmosphere. In one temple the quarters for seven women was a room fit for only two people to live in. Another temple had a gaping hole in the roof for a couple of years before we decided to attend to the devotees' needs instead of sending the money to the BBT. Meanwhile, the privileged class in our society spend several times the cost of repairing the roof for travel and lavish living. A big popular trend is *sannyasis* building homes in Vrndavana for their one month, perhaps two month annual visits to the *dhama*. Some don't even come annually. And this is in flagrant disregard for Prabhupada's saying that *sannyasis* should not do it. The local people are appalled at our society and complain about our example. Only a conscienceless or self-estranged person can be in the renounced order yet have an opulent home in Vrndavana. Prabhupada, meanwhile, wanted gosvamis (setting exemplary standards, not just having the title) to live in Vrndavana. We make a mockery of his instructions.

There is another way to see the inattention to the ordinary devotees' needs. We have made the institution into the deity. Instead of the institution being dedicated to serving the individual,

the devotees, we train people to believe that they are servants of the institution, and that view is believed to be non different from serving Krsna. In our paradigm, to lead is not to serve, but to accept service.

(8) *the windows were barred, and in addition to guards there was a warden, a superintendent (Zimbardo), a parole board, and a grievance committee:* To my knowledge, we don't have barred windows, but the philosophy is powerful enough in its hold on our intelligence to serve that purpose; and when we have authoritarian dynamics we have the mental equivalent of barred windows: A young woman, aged 22, obviously emotionally shaken, gave me several examples about her authoritarian temple president's abusive relationship with her, but she blamed herself the entire time for her condition. At that time she was half-way around the world from her temple, so I encouraged her to not go back. She told me that she has to go back, because "I can hear his voice constantly in my head telling me I'm a nonsense and in maya and I just have to go back and go out and sell stickers." Who needs barred windows when one can have that effect?

I ended up having to loan her money for her ticket back to abuse, because she insisted on going back. After a year of more abuse and several expensive phone calls seeking my help, she finally found the strength to leave for a healthier environment. Up to the last minute she was subjected to abuse, called a lusty prostitute and other degrading names, because she was unsteady "in doing the pick." Imagine even for an nth of a second Prabhupada doing something like this to a disciple.

That temple president is entrenched in his "service" and in a few more years, he may get promoted, eventually making it to GBC. We should consider how many like him have already come up through the ranks, but few of us will do this. The majority will do what we have been trained to do, fault whoever speaks out, discussing our dirty laundry in print. It's the path of least resistance; it's also the path of not facing reality. Actually, this dirty laundry should be discussed in a court of law.

The Peter Principle states that in any organization the tendency is for people to get promoted to the level of their incompetence. In our organization it is not unusual to get promoted several levels beyond one's incompetence, because we do not practice our philosophy of engaging people based on their qualities (competence), we engage people in leadership as rewards for service rendered to the institution to keep them happy, even if their only major ability at that organizational level is to make others miserable. If we practiced *varnasrama* culture instead of corporate culture, we would avoid making this mistake, but to let go of corporate culture, which is *rajasic*, is too difficult, and entails too much effort, unless one desires to change modes and operate in *sattva-guna*. But why labor to change modes, to upgrade one's character, when we have an organizational structure in which upward mobility is equated with spiritual progress?

In a bureaucracy, promotion is the prime incentive for productivity, while emphasis on productivity is the result of placing the institution's goals as the prime objective, above the spiritual well-being of the individual. Later, we shall see how the institution alienates the individual from himself and how the hierarchical structure becomes a network of impersonal dealings.

(9) *under surveillance:* We have the most insipid form of this--neighbor spying on neighbor--like the former Iron Curtain countries--because in authoritarian systems people fear being out of line. One of the ways of achieving security in the system is by carrying news about others. By stroking the system, we hope to get stroked by the system. Hopefully, it won't be long before our dynamics reach the same end as that of the Iron Curtain countries.

(10) *might be harassed:* In ISKCON, if you let on that you think for yourself, you're likely to be harrassed to no end, in a variety of ways, from ostracization to verbal abuse, and not always by authorities. The mass of devotees know instinctively that you are "tainted goods" and give you a wide berth. Isolation is a form of harrassment in itself. Then there are the

maverick types, usually ill-informed about the issues, who take it upon themselves to set you straight. In some places the smitten disciples of gurus will do the harrassing and that will be tolerated by the authorities in the belief you are getting just desserts for your "offense" of daring to have a dissenting opinion from Srila Guru Maharaja. The pressure to conform (social coercion), is high and the price of nonconformity is higher.

Sometimes the local authorities claim responsibility in the personal lives of adult devotees that the same authorities would never accept in their personal life. For example, as I am working on this chapter, a grown woman, college educated, came to me in great distress because certain of her authorities want to manage her life for her by making her decision as to whether or not she should attend classes by a devotee. Our conversation went along these lines:

permission from my Guru Maharaja to attend classes," she explained to me. "That's your decision. You may or may not take his permission, but the point is that's between you and your guru. Why do they feel they have to get involved in your personal life? Do you monitor their lives?"

"They say they are responsible for me."

"You are a grown woman. It is your business if you want to go to class or sleep the entire time you are not doing your service. If someone discusses it with you, that is one thing, but to make your decisions, manipulate and control your life, is not "responsibility," it is control.

"So what should I do?"

"That you have to decide. I will not tell you what to do. I'll tell you what I think about the situation and you must make a decision what to do according to your capacity. Do you understand?"

The devotee was very upset about the pressure she was under, because, understandably she resented being manipulated by the people who provided her with room and board in exchange for service, she did not realize that she would have to pay an emotional price and lose her authority over her own life in the process.

"When you give in to them, where will it end? They will encroach in your life whenever it suits them. Then, what happens to you?" If we are willing to do this to a 35 year-old college-educated person, what will we do to children? How functional can they be when they get through such a system?

(11) some of their basic rights curtailed during imprisonment: We do not have to go to jail to have this experience. As the woman's story above attests, infringing on one's basic rights is par for the course in our society. Also, in ISKCON, in the name of "cooperate to show your love for Srila Prabhupada," we have "laws" that restrict our movements, our reading material, how we may discuss the philosophy, and even whom we may associate with. The words of the respective spiritual masters are not enough. By making "laws" we don't have obedient and disobedient disciples or members, we have criminals.

Now we have laws to punish members whose thinking is not "lined up," from censure all the way to excommunication. Prabhupada never excommunicated anyone, yet now we wield more authority to punish than he did. But do we have the same power he did to confer grace? All these laws and the underlying dynamics serve to hobble our reasoning faculty. Those who are enfranchised as leaders are free to use their critical faculties on you, sometimes with devastating results, but woe be to you if you think you have an equal right to observe, reason, and speak out, unless you have money by the barrel. ISKCON respects money more than virtue, more than principle, more than character, more than devotion. In this regard, ISKCON is more like the Indian government than a gathering of men of ideal character, of principle. If you have money, you can have a voice, providing you are actually surrendering your money as well. If you insist on holding on to it, you will be shunned for being "too attached." The fact that you may have legit concerns about the handling of the money will never be considered as valid grounds for your being "attached," prudent, cautious. You are just "on a

trip." That's if you have money. If you don't have money, you are "simply useless," an "idle meditation," or "a troublemaker." These are some of the milder epithets you will win. And the unwritten law of the society is that the laws don't really apply to the lawmakers.

And no one sees the absurdity of this. No one stands up to question and protest against all this irrationality, all done in Prabhupada's name. Like one of Woody Allen's characters said about the tel-evangelists, "If Jesus Christ came back, he'd never stop throwing up." Is it Prabhupada's fate to have his name misused like the showbottle Christians do in the name of Christ? Prabhupada cried in 1976 when the already irrational GBC, influenced by one forceful man, passed a resolution to ship all householders to Australia. It was bad enough that such an inane idea was even discussed on the floor of the GBC, but it went beyond that; it got proposed, seconded, and then garnered a two-thirds vote to become a resolution.

Nondevotees, who don't follow our prohibition against intoxication, are capable of more sober decision-making than this.

We'd like to think we are now beyond such irrationality, that the current GBC is the most mature group we've ever had. The sad truth is that now the GBC hat is confused with the guru hat and the leaders think themselves absolute. Ironically, being absolute translates into license to be irrational with impunity, in contrast to Lord Caitanya's statement, that the *uttama-adhikari* is symptomized by his capacity for logic and reason based on *sastra*.

(12) *transformed the prisoners' "rights" into "privileges"*: In authoritarian systems discussion is never an option in trying to work through a problem. "Firepower" is the preferred solution, because in that *rajasic* worldview the active principle is: might is right. Krsna does not condone *rajasic* solutions, because they are poison in the end; however, when the modes of nature are pulling our strings, philosophy takes a backseat, or philosophy is used to justify might is right.

Curtailling rights is a natural step once one has flexed muscle. The idea is to prevent the rebellion from happening again. History shows that beating dissenters back into line never works when they have legitimate gripes; rather the beating is added to their list of gripes. But all complaints are envisioned as threat rather than an opportunity to discern how to lead more effectively. Even if their gripes are not legitimate, there is no harm in civil hearing of dissenters concerns and discussing the matter to some mutual conclusion. Authoritarian types, however, always think this procedure a loss of face and loss of control. Actually, when leaders attend to the concerns of even the smallest dependent, they are considered benign. It never fails to win hearts, but *rajo-guna* blinds us to the obvious.

Problem-solving leadership, to-lead-is-to-serve leadership, knows that wavemaking is symptomatic of a problem. Leaders focus on locating and defining it, then try solving it in the most systematic, far-reaching way. Irrational leaders focus on the wavemakers, and consider the problem-solved if successful in silencing them. Of course, killing off the bearer of unpleasant news never solves the problem. History shows that most likely it festers and reaches explosive proportions.

(13) *played the prisoners off against one another and systematically harassed them*: This is a big favorite in dysfunctional systems. Almost everyone wants to win points with the system, so everyone else becomes fair play in each other's scheme to advance. It even induces yesterday's good friends to become today's spirited enemies. And this goes on within a "spiritual" institution as much as any mundane assembly.

(14) *One of the prisoners showed such severe symptoms of emotional disturbance (disorganized thinking, uncontrollable crying and screaming), after only one day he had to be released*: This I have witnessed several times. Regretfully, sometimes I caused others to have it, sometimes I went through it myself. The major difference between Zimbardo's hell and our program is that we do not get released. The philosophy has such a hold on us that we are willing to endure dealings that have nothing to do with the philosophy, dynamics that shrink us, believing all the while that the problem is in us.

(15) *On the third day a rumor spread through the "prison" about a mass escape plot. This led the superintendent and the guards to take various repressive and preventative steps:* In 1994 a rumor spread through the movement that Satyanarayana and I had a different opinion than Srila Prabhupada about the origin of the conditioned souls, even though Prabhupada said in many places that no *nitya-siddha* can fall to become a conditioned soul, as in this example from *Bhagavatam* 3.16.26 purport:

The conclusion is that no one falls from the spiritual world, or Vaikuntha planet, for it is the eternal abode.

Despite "the conclusion" of Srila Prabhupada, so-called experts decided that our conclusion which was the same as Prabhupada's was wrong and "offensive." Thus in 1995, the book Satyanarayana and I researched and wrote to respond to the rumor was banned, by no due process, but a pretense of one, just to fool the mass of devotees. It worked. Most devotees being uninformed think there was an open discussion and that we were "defeated" fair and square. Even GBC's believed that this is what happened. The irrational claims against us led the GBC to take various repressive, what they thought were preventative steps, against us. Ironically, on the philosophical issue we were brow-beaten with "Prabhupada said," but what he said about procedure for resolving issues--namely by open discussion on the basis of *sastra* --was completely ignored. Emotion, slander, ad hominem fallacy, misquoting, and muscle were all preferred to rational discourse. And after experiences like this I, as a preacher, am supposed to win converts to Krsna consciousness and ask them to commit their lives to ISKCON. A truly astonishing notion.

Meanwhile, despite our mouthing "Prabhupada, Prabhupada, Prabhupada," working ourselves into an impressive frenzy, but nevertheless an irrational one, are we still in the *parampara*? Most devotees will say, "Yes, because the GBC says so." But the GBC has said and done so many things over the years that was wrong, philosophically and practically, and sometimes downright foolish, so why should we blindly follow them now? Especially in light of Prabhupada's "Nothing should be accepted blindly. Everything should be accepted with care and with caution." This means that we understand everything on the basis of *sastra pramana*. Without *sastra pramana* there is nothing we are obliged to accept as *siddhanta*. Therefore Krsna says *yah sastra viddhim utsrtjya*, without *sastra viddhi* we achieve no happiness (*na sukham*) , no perfection (*na siddhim*) , and miss the goal of life (*na param gatim*) .

I cooperated with the ban on our book, but having faith in Srila Prabhupada's oft repeated directive that disagreements between godbrothers should be resolved by discussion, I tried to get an appeal by going through the system. My efforts to get a dialogue going only met with more repressive and "preventative" steps and culminated with me being given ultimatums, which I could not follow, for fear of dehumanizing myself and the authorities, because it has been noted that complicity with authoritarian dealings degrades both parties.

Then I was forbidden to speak in any ISKCON center, for I had incurred the full wrath of the society's leaders. My crime, not obeying the GBC. And what way the crime that brought the ultimatums that I refused to obey? That only the GBC's know. None of these procedures followed any system of due process, so I continued my noncooperation policy. Research has taught me that the only response to authoritarianism is to refuse to comply. I love Srila Prabhupada too much to cooperate with the mutually destructive dynamics that are in force in our society at present.

(16) *some of the guards seemed to derive great satisfaction from exercising power and behaving in a sadistic manner:* In ISKCON, we like to believe that we are above this kind of petty motivation. "We are Vaisnavas." This is nothing but the triumph of hope over experience. Self-examination and incisive observation will reveal that we are capable of deriving exquisite delight in exercising power and in trying to crush those we oppose. Some

take pride in their capacity to do this by under-handed means. They call their approach to wreaking vengeance, which is a symptom of *tamo-guna*, "being subtle."

(17) A particularly interesting observation was that the use of force, harassment, and aggression by the guards increased steadily from day to day, in spite of the fact that prisoner resistance declined as time went by: This is a striking phenomenon when one is unfamiliar with the psychology of authoritarianism, which is rooted in self-contempt. This is hinted at later on where one guard admitted that he hated himself. From this place of self-contempt, the person projects his self-loathing onto his victims. Yet the guilt of how he is dehumanizing another human like himself drives him to display extraordinary vehemence towards his victims. It becomes a vicious cycle of alternating self-loathing and lashing out.

But the victims' shrinking back on themselves and reduction of resistance does not help. In fact, they are disdained for it. The authority loses all respect for his victims, probably out of a secret hope that they would resist and deliver him from his private hell. The question is, does this go on in our society?

Either it does or it can, because we have not shown ourselves to be much different than ordinary society. If we would be hard-headed realists, enough aberrations have shown up in our midst to convince us that it is foolish to assume any dramatic exceptions between our behavior and society at large.

(18) The prisoners, on the other hand, began to slouch and keep their eyes fixed on the ground: We have this with increasing frequency. Unfortunately, our leaders are not in touch enough to pick up on the signs of depression on the faces of the devotees. Our leaders simply keep their eyes focused on the new, hopeful, zealous devotees. If their godbrothers are miserable, that is considered stemming from envy out of hand. Injustice or deprivation are never considered possibilities. How can one not be perturbed when ill-treated by his own godbrothers?

Prabhupada said about his godbrothers who became leaders in the Gaudiya Math after Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's disappearance, "They were thinking, 'Who are these godbrothers, let them go away'." And history is repeating itself under the rubric "Casualties of war." Is it the fate of every generation to be psychologically brutalized at the hands of their godbrothers? I remember how Srila Prabhupada used to be so pleased by the bright faces of his followers. In those days, he proudly referred to us as "happies," in contrast to the hippies. Today a bright face among our devotees is more the exception than the general rule. I saw so many unhappy devotees at the 1996 Mayapur Festival that I was eager to be away from the festival. No less than four other devotees confided to me that they had made the same observation. If we ask ourselves why, and seek honest answers, one answer will stand out among all others--our dysfunctional dynamics.

(19) Perhaps the most vivid accounts of what it was like to take part in such dehumanizing experience were the diary entries of those directly involved: Here we have a good example of how to diagnose the physical and mental health of ISKCON: not by an impersonal reference to the philosophy as idealized in a book, but by seeking feedback from those involved in the experience. Leaders should conduct interviews, or better still, routinely give out anonymous questionnaires to get feedback from the devotees, so we can have informed leadership. Lord Rama personally mingled with His citizens in disguise so he could understand their outlook on issues in His kingdom. We glorify Him for it, but we do not follow in his footsteps.

(20) Before the experiment one of the guards wrote in his diary that he was a pacifist and so unaggressive that he could not imagine maltreating any other living being. By the third day, he appeared to be thoroughly enjoying the power to manipulate people: Here is an example of how one's ideals and character are subverted by circumstances or by the group. Power is so seductive. Are our men above this?

ISKCON history does not give us a positive answer. It would be prudent, therefore, to have systems of checks and balances to protect persons with power from themselves, as well as to

protect the integrity and sanity of our society. Accountability to the leaders is assumed. We need to establish systems of accountability from the leaders. That would protect all of us from the tendency of power to manipulate.

(21) *Before the prisoners received visitors, he warned them not to complain unless they wanted the visit to come to an abrupt end:* This is a classic example of how the little functionary in the bureaucratic setup finds exquisite glee in wielding his "power" in the pettiest of ways just to assert, "I have might." It paints a pathetic picture of spiritual life. This problem is also there in the big functionary, who is owned and controlled by his Little Prabhu. Read all about it in the chapter by that name.

(22) *What he really liked, he said, was having almost total control over everything that was said and done:* This is the same pacifist guard who was transformed by a little power that was destined to end within two weeks. Imagine absolute power for an undetermined period, eternity. Control seduces many who take to the role of guru. They don't go in with that motive, but power seduces them. Imagine what absolute power can trigger in the minds of persons not fully prepared to serve as circuits for the power of God (parampara) to flow through them. If the truth is to be told, it is nothing short of madness, as we shall see in the ensuing pages. We lived through it once before when it was manifest as the zonal acarya blunder. This time around we are at a loss to label the problem, perhaps because the same people who were instrumental in dismantling the zonal acarya's status have now all gone absolute. Thus we now have significantly less godbrothers to rise up and address the issue.

(23) *On the fifth day, problems arose because a new prisoner refused to eat his sausage. The guard's diary at this point reads as follows: "We throw him into the Hole ordering him to hold sausages in each hand. . . We decide to play upon prisoner solidarity and tell the new one that all the others will be deprived of visitors if he does not eat his dinner. . . I walk by and slam my stick into the Hole door . . . I am very angry at this prisoner for causing discomfort and trouble for the others. I decided to force-feed him, but he wouldn't eat. I let the food slide down his face. . . :* It is most interesting how the guard, despite his provocative displays of power, sees the prisoner as "causing trouble for the others." I have witnessed the same perverse logic in perpetrators of absurdity in the Krsna consciousness movement. This irrationality becomes the rationalization for everything, up to savaging the psyche of the "offender."

The ISKCON version that enables us to perpetrate similar vindictiveness is that the offender is "disturbing the devotees." For their protection and security we rationalize inhumane, non-Vaisnava dealings, but it is not a problem, because in authoritarian dealings, the end justifies the means. Once we decide that our irrational methods are a necessary evil, our strategies tend to become more and more necessary and less and less rational. The alienated man, out of touch with himself, has not a twinge of conscience while enacting all this physical or mental cruelty. How can he when he believes he's doing his duty to God?

(24) *I hated myself for making him eat but I hated him more for not eating."* This is really the essence of the problem--self-contempt projected unto others. We want to be perfect so passionately that we resent our inability to be that perfect. Our discovery that we are driven by the pettiest and cruelest motives causes us to loathe ourselves even more. This self-contempt is manifest in a most curious way. Finding it difficult to face, we project our contempt elsewhere, unto another person.

In *Escape From Freedom*, by Erich Fromm, is an enlightening discussion from his study of character types. In just a few sentences he explains the phenomenon of this guard's attitude:

For the authoritarian character there exist, so to speak, two sexes: the powerful ones and the powerless ones. His love, admiration and readiness for submission are automatically aroused by power, whether of a person or of an institution. Power fascinates him not for any values for which a specific power

may stand, but just because it is power. Just as his "love" is automatically aroused by power, so powerless people or institutions automatically arouse his contempt. The very sight of a powerless person makes him want to attack, dominate, humiliate him. Whereas a different kind of character is appalled by the idea of attacking one who is helpless, the authoritarian character feels the more aroused the more helpless his object has become.

Underlying this self-contempt and frustration for not being more virtuous is our fear of being vulnerable, of being persons. Even after taking to spiritual life, we have trouble letting down our guard and actually caring about others, actually extending ourselves on others' behalf, actually seeing them and thinking of them as persons; we think of them as things. To see others as persons we have to be vulnerable ourselves; we have to be human. This is uncomfortable for most of us. We are more comfortable with the persona of being a super-Vaisnava. That's why we have the phenomenon in ISKCON that the "advanced" devotees become more and more inaccessible to the ordinary devotees. They need the distance to insulate themselves from being vulnerable.

Also, the exalted, the pure, comes to loathe the unwashed masses. They are closed, but affect openness. We have another type of "advanced" devotee, who is able to elicit feeling warm and fuzzy from the younger devotees. This passes as personalism: however, the possible defect of this method is that affection can be used as a technique for coercion.

Being personal is more difficult than overcoming gross sex desire. Mayavadis, for example, sometimes overcome gross sex desire, yet, philosophically speaking, they cannot understand nor practice personalism. Practically, in my experience and that of several others, there are many institutions that profess impersonalism but nevertheless practice more personalism than us. This was observed in a news article by someone conducting a study of spiritual groups. Failing in our repeated attempts to be better devotees, in the sense of striving to be a super-Vaisnava instead of becoming more human, causes us to have trouble really believing that being "the servant of the servant of the servant, one thousand times removed" is possible. Srila Prabhupada touched on this problem of conditioned soul's fear of being a person in his purport to 4.10 in Bhagavad-gita. One may say that there he was speaking about impersonalism, but the authoritarian dynamic, in which we treat people as things, is nothing but impersonalism.

In the summer of 1996, I visited Baltimore. The son of the devotees who were hosting me, a man in his mid-twenties, but 16 years in the movement, who had lived several years in the *asrama* before returning to the sanity of his home environment, was driving me somewhere. I asked him, "What do you consider the main problem in our movement?"

"Impersonalism," he shot back. He did not need a moment to consider. "We speak personalism, but we practice impersonalism."

Talk about finding out the health of the society by asking the members in the trenches. I was so impressed that this relatively young man hit it right on the nose. Impersonalists fear being persons, that is the self-contempt that they project unto others when they are caught in a dysfunctional system.

(25) only about a third of the guards, they felt, were so consistently hostile and degrading to be described as sadistic: The ratio of one part sadists to two parts good guys is not a consolation. Had the experiment gone 14 days we would very likely have a significant increase in sadists. Still, taking it at face value, the real conclusion is that it only takes a few rotten people to create a rotten experience for scores of others. The ratio of Nazis to non-Nazis was small also, but they wreaked havoc on millions. And their ambition was to bring the whole planet under their sway, which, incidentally, is our goal too. Point to ponder: Will we use Krsna consciousness to enslave the planet or to liberate it?

(26) *the prisoners became progressively more passive as the days passed, and sank into a state of depression and helplessness.* : This is the natural result of one giving up one's power. This is always a choice, for no one can take away our power, we have to give it away. But once we do it, the dispirited states described above follow in due course. In the worse cases, it culminates in either a vengeful lashing out, a nervous breakdown, or suicide. Possibly all three.

These healthy citizens were so disempowered by the situation they could not rise up and object to the negative trend of the experiment. At this point we should note that it is the healthy that give the most extreme reaction to dysfunctional dynamics, because the dysfunctional feel right at home in their own element. Unless they are personally in a crisis they never really face the reality that they are dysfunctional. But the more one is balanced, the more easily irrational situations affect one.

The process of coaxing us to give up our power can be subtle. It may be wrested away by the dynamics, in which one voluntarily, innocently goes along. But one can keep his power and dignity even in the most extreme circumstances. This is shown in Viktor Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, a first-hand account of life in a concentration camp in World War II. It showed in stark contrast how some prisoners gave up their power to their captors and some did not, though they lived side by side in the same horrid conditions.

The philosophy may be used to coax away our authority over ourselves. *Trnad api sunicena* is the favorite referent for those who want to see us powerless. "Cooperate for Srila Prabhupada" is another tool for eliciting our willing, blind compliance.

Arjuna had the opposite experience. He began in a powerless condition and became powerful after hearing from Krsna. We can use this as a kind of litmus test of the dynamics we experience. When we are made to feel powerful, when we feel our fundamental rights as human beings are being respected, we know that is the right dynamic, Krsna conscious. Here is one of several instances where Prabhupada talks about the same point:

After describing *Bhagavad-gita*, He said, *yatheccchasi tatha kuru*. He does not force. That is not good. Forceful thing will not stand. Just like we advise, "Rise early in the morning." This is advised. Not that I have to force everyone. I may force one day, two days, but if one does not practice it, then simply force is useless. So similarly, Krsna does not force anyone to leave this material world. (Lec. 1973) When we are made to feel powerless, forced, intimidated, that is indicative of the dysfunctional program. "Forceful thing will not stand."

(27) *Perhaps the reason for this was that they began to realize there was very little they could do to improve matters or control the environment. As the old saying goes, "There's no point in banging your head against a brick wall."* The saying is correct, but it does not mean we in ISKCON have no alternative. We can take positive action in an unpleasant situation; after all, we are not behind bars. We do have the opportunity to choose our environment. We simply have to take back our power from whomever we gave it away to and do the needful for Lord Caitanya, like the author of the Foreword. Krsna consciousness means to have the strength of character to respond appropriately to life's situations.

In this case, one must seek a better situation for one's spiritual life. Living under the "shelter" of irrational authorities cannot be justified by any amount of turning the philosophy this way and that. Not even "Cooperate for Srila Prabhupada." In the dysfunctional system "Cooperate for Srila Prabhupada" means agree to go crazy for Srila Prabhupada. But he himself does not want us to go crazy. He want us to go sane. That was the whole point of his "Who is Crazy?" pamphlet. Cooperate for him means to cooperate with what is favorable for Krsna consciousness; indeed noncooperation with authoritarianism is cooperating for Srila Prabhupada. If devotees cannot find humanitarian dynamics within the society, they should move on. Don't empower the dysfunctional system by participating in it. Move on. Consider having to move on Krsna's test of your faith and courage, a growth opportunity. His tests are not signs of His rejecting us; He is qualifying us for His service. Join like-minded persons

who want to stick with the process and move on. This may actually help our leaders to come to their senses.

(28) Despite its premature end, Zimbardo's experiment showed that brutal, ugly prison situations can develop even when upright citizens play the parts of the prisoners and guards: Not only prison situations can cause upright citizens to show their brutal and ugly side. It goes on in institutions of all kinds or in pockets within otherwise stable institutions, even in families. Authoritarianism can happen in the classroom or on the *sankirtana* party, wherever there is power to be had. It is just a question of degree. I have had it happen between my doctor and me. He thought his "authority" meant he had the right to make my decisions for me.

Whenever someone aggresses on us, attempting to take our power by covert or overt means, we are in a dysfunctional situation. Going along with it means that it will happen again and again; and cooperating empowers it to get worse the next time around.

One of the giveaway signs of dysfunctional dynamics is when our freedom to express ourselves is just not there, we can't speak our doubts freely and completely for fear of repercussion. Also, if you are hit with *trnad api sunicena* to gag you, or if you are criticized for being upset, rather than being empathized with, you are caught in a dysfunctional or impersonal dynamic. Another sign is when respect for authority is deemed more important than what you have to say. Then "etiquette" is used to shut you up.

While the *sastra* enjoins that we must respect spiritual authority, that respect cannot become the very obstacle to expressing our doubts and emotions, our misgivings and so on. And a genuine spiritual authority will want to ensure that it doesn't. A genuine spiritual authority knows that revealing your mind is essential for the true dynamic of Krsna consciousness to take place. It is a symptom of a loving exchange. Look at Arjuna coming apart completely in front of Krsna. True, Krsna scolded him, but not for his state or presentation, but for his unenlightened understanding. He never criticized Arjuna that "You are upset. You are emotional. We can talk later." Prabhupada never did that either, because it is more a gag, a roadblock to communications, than anything else. In dysfunctional dealings, however, this line of unreasoning is used frequently.

(29) The dehumanization which occurred in the Stanford experiment could hardly be attributed to the "deviant personalities" of those involved; the most natural explanation was that it was the prison environment which was mainly responsible for the participants' behavior: In Zimbardo's own words, his study revealed "the power of social, institutional forces to make most men engage in evil deeds."

They were not deviant persons, but that is beside the point. What was the outcome? And the prison environment is hardly to blame. It is something in human nature, because the problem of dysfunctional authority is not limited to the prison situation.

Zimbardo hits it head on when he concludes that his six day hell showed the potential of social and institutional settings to move men to evil, either monstrous or trivial. However, we must keep in mind that when religious belief is involved, the potential for monstrous evil is compounded. As Pascal observed: "Men never do evil so wilfully and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction."

History validates his view several times over. Even the sky is not the limit when we can rationalize our envy and hatred of another in God's name. Then dysfunctional behavior becomes the norm; and normal behavior is viewed as abnormal.

(30) A remark by one ex-convict throws some light on the passivity of the mock prisoners: "The only way to really make it with the bosses (in Texas prisons) is to withdraw into yourself, both physically and mentally--literally making yourself as small as possible. It's another way to dehumanize you. They want you to make no waves in prison." In an institution, the tendency is to want no waves. To that extent, all institutions are comparable to a prison. For the sake of keeping oil on the waters, the wavemakers get the brunt of authority. This

sends a message to the group members "Don't make waves. It's best to grin and bear the unacceptable." This causes them to shrink back upon themselves in an attempt to be as small a target as possible.

In *Our Mission* Ernest Becker was quoted on how the saintly person does not cause people to shrink back upon themselves; he does not coerce and intimidate them. Rather he opens them and teaches them to open others in turn. He is talking about empowerment being the genuine spiritual experience. That is our system of *parampara*. If this dynamic of empowering others is lost, though the philosophy itself remains intact, then, because the vital role of *parampara* is corrupted or dysfunctional, the *parampara* is lost.

Chapter Five - Dysfunctional Obedience: A Study

Obedience is a principle integral to military, social, and spiritual discipline. Yet in all cases it happens that conflict arises in the relationship between authority figures and their subordinates. The area of conflict for professional soldiers is between military discipline and respect for human life. In the Vietnam war, Lt. Calley's defence for ordering the massacre of civilians at My Lai was that he was "doing his duty." In organized social and spiritual life, the area of conflict is between the principle of obedience and respect for the individual as a person, not as a thing.

Understandably, therefore, the question "What extent are people willing to obey?" has been an area of interest to psychologists. Their findings have been unexpected, sometimes shocking, but invaluable to our understanding of human nature. Often the result of psychological research merely confirms common sense, but an experiment on the dangers of obedience, done at Yale between 1960 and 1963, stood the expectations of professionals and the public on its head. For his study, Stanley Milgram received the Socio-Psychological Prize of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1964.

The following account appeared in *Mindwatching*, the same source for Zimbardo's prison experiment related two chapters earlier:

Imagine that you have arrived at Yale University to take part in a study of learning and memory. You go into a room and are met by a 31-year-old high school biology teacher, the experimenter, whose demeanor is rather stern throughout the experiment. The other person in the room is also there to take part in the experiment. He is a rotund, 47-year-old accountant of Irish-American stock.

The experimenter tells you that he is interested in the effects of punishment on learning. It is decided by drawing lots that the accountant will be the learner, and you will be the teacher. You go into an adjacent room, where the learner is strapped into an "electric chair" apparatus, and an electrode is attached to his wrist. Electrode paste is then applied "to avoid blisters and burns". You are told that the electrode is connected to a nearby shock generator unit.

You then go into another room, which has a shock generator unit. It has 30 lever switches, each labelled with a voltage between 15 and 450 volts. Groups

of four switches of increasing voltage have the following verbal designations: Slight Shock, Moderate Shock, Strong Shock, Very Strong Shock, Intense Shock, Extreme Intensity Shock, and Danger: Severe Shock. The final two lever switches are simply designated XXX.

You are told to administer shock to the learner every time he gives a wrong answer on the learning task, and you are instructed to "move one level higher on the shock generator each time the learner flashes a wrong answer". You are also told that although the shocks can be extremely painful, they cause no permanent tissue damage. You yourself are given a sample shock of 45 volts to show you that the equipment is working.

As the learning task proceeds, the learner makes a number of errors, and is given progressively more intense shocks. After receiving shocks of 75, 90, and 105 volts, he merely grunts. At 120 volts, he shouts, "Experimenter, get me out of here! I won't be in the experiment any more! I refuse to go on!" At 180 volts, he yells, "I can't stand the pain," and by 270 volts his response becomes an agonized scream. Thereafter, there are shrieks of agony, and vehement refusals to go on with the experiment or provide answers to the learning task. When the 300-volt shock is reached, he pounds on the wall. If you, the "teacher", say at any point that you don't want to continue the experiment, the experimenter tells you that you must.

What would you do in this unpleasant situation? What do you imagine other people would do? Stanley Milgram put these two questions to groups of psychiatrists, students, and middle-class adults. When predicting their own behavior, absolutely everyone predicted they would defy the experimenter and refuse to continue with the experiment either when the shock reached 300 volts or, typically, much earlier. Perhaps because people tend to have a more flattering opinion of themselves than other people, there was a tendency to believe that other people would be less reluctant to prolong the suffering of the learner. For example, psychiatrists at a leading medical school predicted that 3.73 per cent of subjects would still obey the experimenter at 300 volts, and that only one in a thousand would go on to the 450-volt stage.

Most people unfamiliar with the actual results would predict that only the occasional psychopath or sadist would be likely to keep on administering intense electric shocks to an obviously distraught and unwilling subject. In fact, Milgram found that 62 per cent of the people exposed to the condition just described continued to obey the experimenter, and continued to the 450 volt level. In fact there was 500 times as many individuals prepared to administer the maximum shock than was predicted by the group of eminent psychiatrists!

(1) Milgram's findings obviously run counter to common sense, and appear to indicate that people are prepared to go to rather extreme lengths in order to remain obedient to the commands of higher authority. On the face of it, this seems an extraordinary and very puzzling finding, and one without much obvious relevance to everyday life. However, it is worth remembering how people at work act towards their superiors. (2) People in authority frequently say or do something that is obviously wrong or inadequate, and yet there is a universal reluctance among subordinates to challenge their decisions. If anyone

does challenge a decision, he or she is likely to experience a certain amount of anxiety.

While you were reading the description of the experiment, you may well have wondered about the ethics of conducting an experiment in which extremely painful electric shocks are administered to the "learner." (3) The Milgram study has, indeed, been attacked on ethical grounds, not because of the damage done to the learner, but because of the effects on the teacher. In fact, the learner was working in liaison with the experimenter, and did not actually receive any shocks at all. The drawing of lots was "rigged" so that the mild-mannered accountant would always be the learner and the subject would always be the teacher.

But the effects of the experiment on the "teachers" were dramatic. For example, a 46-year old encyclopedia salesman passed from nervous laughter to such violent convulsions that the experiment had to be halted. As one observer reported: "I observed a mature and initially poised businessman enter the laboratory smiling and confident. Within 20 minutes he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse. He constantly pulled on his earlobe, and twisted his hands. At one point, he pushed his fist into his forehead and muttered: 'Oh God, let's stop it.' And yet he continued to respond to every word of the experimenter, and obeyed to the end.

This was not an exceptional case. Many people had fits of nervous laughter, sweated, groaned, trembled, and dug their fingernails into their skin. Not surprisingly, there was considerable public concern and even outrage about the morality of exposing people to this kind of conflict. Should psychologists really be permitted to reduce anyone to a 'twitching, stuttering wreck'? Mightn't a person's self-image be permanently affected by the realization that he had been prepared to go to such extreme lengths to obey the authority of the experimenter? Furthermore, it was argued, Milgram's subjects placed their trust in the experimenter and assumed he would act in a careful, responsible manner: wasn't this trust abused by putting the subjects through such a degrading experience? Finally, the success of the experiment depended on deception--the actual situation was not what it appeared to be.

Confronted with this hornet's nest of moral problems, Milgram put forward a number of reasonable counter-arguments to justify the research he had carried out. He pointed out that there was a full debriefing at the end of the experiment, with all the participants being told that the learner had not actually received any dangerous electric shock; the true purpose of the experiment was also explained to them. (4) Of those who took part, 84 percent stated that they were glad to have been in the experiment, 15 per cent indicating neutral feelings, and only one person in a hundred expressed negative feelings. Further questioning revealed that four-fifths of the participants felt that more experiments of this sort should be conducted, and 74 per cent said they had learned something of personal importance as a result of taking part. (5) Many participants said that they would be more wary in future about assuming that authority figures should always be obeyed.

(6) Milgram also argued that what critics of his work really objected to was the unflattering picture it drew of human nature rather than the deception or the methodology involved. Would the Milgram study have been the subject of public outrage if all the participants had disobeyed the experimenter at the first sign of discomfort from the learner? The evidence suggests not. Several people were given a description of the Milgram study: some were told that most of the participants were obedient to the experimenter, and the rest that most of them were disobedient. They rated the experiment as more harmful and providing a worse experience when there was a large measure of obedience. Although many psychologists worry about the ethics of deception, and argue that it is in principle wrong to mislead people who take part in the experiments, few lay observers felt that the morality of the Milgram study had anything to do with whether or not the participants were deceived.

(7) The most frightening implication of the Milgram study is that half the population of North America is either sadistic or psychopathic, or both, which is clearly absurd, whatever we see on our television screens or read in the newspapers. (8) In fact, when similar studies were carried out in Rome, South Africa, Australia and Munich, the level of obedience to the experimenter was rather greater than that obtained by Milgram. Indeed, 85 per cent of the people who were tested in Munich were discovered to be fully obedient to the experimenter.

(9) Since over half the population in most countries is apparently prepared to administer very strong electric shocks to other people, then most of the obedient participants in Milgram-type studies must be quite ordinary people. The case of Adolf Eichmann, tried and convicted for ordering the deaths of thousands of Jews, is relevant here. The prosecution attempted to depict Eichmann as a sadistic monster, which seems reasonable enough in view of the enormity of his crimes. In actual fact his actions were in many ways those of an uninspired bureaucrat who simply sits at his desk and tries to carry out his job competently.

What the Milgram experiment did very successfully was to create a conflict situation in which some forces push the subject towards obedience and others prompt him towards disobedience. (10) In our culture there is a lot of emphasis on the necessity of obeying authority, on the grounds that an efficient and well-organized society can only exist if there is a fairly stable hierarchy in which some people are given power and authority over others. (11) Most societies attempt to ensure obedience by moving the obedient individual up a niche in the hierarchy. This is doubly an ingenious ploy, because the individual is rewarded for his obedience and feels motivated to climb to the next niche and the hierarchy itself is preserved and strengthened. In the Milgram study, the experimenter represents an authority figure. His authority is enhanced by wearing a special coat, by being associated with Yale University, and by his aura of expertise in human behavior and his presumably detailed knowledge of the experiment being carried out. In everyday life, we place responsibility for our health in the hands of our doctor, we go to an accountant for financial advice, and so on. Of necessity we rely heavily on the opinions of various authority figures, and this is what Milgram's subjects were doing.

(12) Are disobedient people different from obedient people? For example, one might imagine that men would be more likely to administer intense shocks than women--after all they are supposed to be more aggressive. On the other hand, women tend to be more yielding than men on many tests of compliance, and so might be readier to obey the experimenter. In fact, Milgram found no difference in obedience between male and female participants. What he did discover was that obedient women became much more nervous and concerned than obedient men. But when ordered to administer genuine electric shocks to a puppy in a Milgram-type study only 54 per cent of male participants did so, as against 100 per cent of female participants, who were prepared to give the most severe shock to the howling and yelping dog!

How does one explain these astonishing findings? As yet, all we can reasonably say is that not enough work has been done to enable psychologists to predict who will be obedient and who will be disobedient. (13) Typically, however, better educated people are more likely to be disobedient, perhaps because they do not regard the experimenter as so intimidating. People who have spent a number of years in one of the armed forces are more likely to be obedient, suggesting that the effects of service discipline are very long-lasting.

(14) Common sense suggests that people with an authoritarian personality are more obedient than those of a more liberal disposition. Milgram tested this and found that obedient subjects had much more pronounced authoritarian attitudes than defiant subjects on a test of fascist tendencies (the 'F' Scale).

Here begins the response to the numbered sections above:

(1) Milgram's findings obviously run counter to common sense, and appear to indicate that people are prepared to go to rather extreme lengths in order to remain obedient to the commands of higher authority: When the higher authority is the highest, God, then the "extreme lengths" may have no boundary, especially in the process of Krsna consciousness where authority is stressed. The authority of the guru is absolute because he is as good as God. The typical example is that if the guru says to the disciple, "This is a rope," the disciple may pick it up. If in the next moment the guru says, "It's a snake," the disciple is supposed to drop it immediately. And again, if the guru says, "It's a rope," the faithful disciple will pick it up immediately.

When citing this example we forget that there is an irrational application of this principle, as well as a rational one. The example is not to be taken literally. Rather, it is used to illustrate how much faith disciple should have in the person whom he or she has duly scrutinized and approved as a qualified guru, not merely a person rubberstamped by institutional fiat. Just as a thousand people yelling "Kundali is a doctor," does not make me a doctor, similarly, the rubberstamp of the institution can never make an unqualified person into a guru. Indeed, the institution declaring someone who is qualified as unqualified does not make them so.

The irrational application of the rope/snake example is for the disciple to take it literally. Looking at the example another way, if the guru stands outdoors at high noon and declares that it is midnight, will the disciple be obliged to see darkness in all directions? Of course not, except in the most extraordinary case where the guru is a sage of such power that his wish becomes nature's command. The self-evident darkness will leave no room for the disciple to twist his perception in order to be "faithful" to the guru.

Otherwise, a rational response to a "guru" who insists that noon is midnight is to submit that he needs a doctor. Irrationality, in other words, is a disqualification in a supposed guru. Spiritual progress is based on submission to rational authority, not on blind following.

Prabhupada's declaration that "I blindly followed my Guru Maharaja" and his caution that "Nothing should be accepted blindly" are reconciled in the next volume in the *Our Mission* series.

(2) *People in authority frequently say or do something that is obviously wrong or inadequate, and yet there is a universal reluctance among subordinates to challenge their decisions. If anyone does challenge a decision, he or she is likely to experience a certain amount of anxiety:* Certainly every inadequate decision of authorities is not worth questioning.

Discretion has to determine what is important enough to pursue and what isn't. There is anxiety however in sticking one's head above the crowd to question an authority if he or she is authoritarian. People generally don't like the discomfort in speaking up, plus they fear possible reprisal. We often fail to note, however, that there is a greater discomfort in not speaking out; it stems from being at odds with one's conscience. This discomfort may not be as intense as the fear of reprisal, but the psychological consequence is far greater, as we shall see in the next chapter.

People are often unaware that if you deny your conscience enough times, you risk losing touch with yourself. In *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard shows this loss to be the greatest loss, yet it passes unawares. One may lose limbs, a wife, money, or some object and be fully aware of the loss, he explains, "*but the loss of one's self goes unnoticed.*" Lord Kṛṣṇa lists "being lost to one's self" as a demonic symptom in the *Bhagavad-gita*.

This is a hellish condition, because one is no longer aware of the discomfort caused by being at odds with one's conscience. However, the effect--the inner experience of being twisted--is still there and, in the case of a subordinate, will generally manifest in subtle attempts to sabotage the relationship, to thwart the desires of the authority. It can become more severe, causing a full blown neurosis. In the case of the authority figure who becomes lost to the self. The solution is two-fold: (1) Those in authority must be rational, willing and open to be challenged, and to reason with the challenger. Here challenge does not mean audacity or arrogant confrontation, but submissive inquiry, even matter-of-fact questioning, depending on the nature of one's relationship with the authority. (2) Those in subordinate roles must have the strength of character to question.

In a voluntary organization such as ours, this dynamic creates accountability, which is not a bad thing, considering our history. The excuse for ducking accountability is that invariably the guru role is mixed with the administrative role. Since one cannot question the guru, one cannot question the administrator, who happens to be a guru as well. That one cannot question the guru is a myth. Kṛṣṇa mandates "submissive inquiry" in *Bhagavad-gita*, so how have we developed the social rationalization that one cannot question? Observers of our society must think this the ultimate folly of ISKCON, especially in light of our history.

The rational thinking that applies here is that if one is advanced, liberated, enlightened, and humble, which the guru is supposed to embody, what is the objection to being held accountable for the things one says and does when functioning within the confines of an institution? And if one is not advanced, liberated, enlightened, and humble, what is the objection to being held accountable for the things one says and does when functioning within the confines of an institution? It is a safeguard for one's own spiritual life in either scenario. Therefore, in the eyes of intelligent persons, refusal to be accountable, or dynamics that accommodate unaccountability, are always suspect.

(3) *The Milgram study has, indeed, been attacked on ethical grounds, not because of the damage done to the learner, but because of the effects on the teacher:* Recall the effects of the experiment on the "teachers." They were dramatic. A 46-year old encyclopedia salesman "had such violent convulsions that the experiment had to be halted." An observer reported: "I observed a mature and initially poised businessman enter the laboratory smiling and confident. Within 20 minutes he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse. He constantly pulled on his earlobe, and

twisted his hands. At one point, he pushed his fist into his forehead and muttered: "Oh God, let's stop it." This man still obeyed to the end.

There were several similar cases, some milder--fits of nervous laughter, sweating, groaning, trembling, digging their fingernails into their hands. There was public outrage about the morality of exposing people to this kind of conflict ("Should psychologists really be permitted to reduce anyone to a 'twitching, stuttering wreck?"). This verifies the point in the earlier section above--that when one has a conflict with one's conscience it can have a negative effect on one's psyche.

(4) Of those who took part, 84 per cent stated that they were glad to have been in the experiment, 15 per cent indicating neutral feelings, and only one person in a hundred expressed negative feelings: It's significant that people were glad to have participated in the experiment, because one expects a greater negative reaction to having their foibles exposed by a deceptive process. In ISKCON we typically object even when the process is not deceptive. But what the experiment unearthed was so horrifying that it sobered up the majority to own their complicity in what could have been real torture of another human being. It is reasonable to assume that henceforth they will listen to their conscience more. Maybe we should run a similar experiment in all our centers with devotees in the role of shocker, so we can all learn to listen to our conscience.

(5) Many participants said that they would be more wary in future about assuming that authority figures should always be obeyed: This is true even in Krsna consciousness, therefore Srila Prabhupada writes in Bhagavad-gita (4.34 purport):

In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. Not only should one hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries.

One must hear submissively from the spiritual master, "but one must also get a clear understanding from him". This means blind following is out of the question. When Prabhupada says "I blindly followed my Guru Maharaja" he meant that his faith was unflinching, not that he was irrational. Another place where Prabhupada cautions us against blind following is in his purport to verses four and five, tenth chapter:

Asammoha, freedom from doubt and delusion, can be achieved when one is not hesitant and when he understands the transcendental philosophy. Slowly but surely he becomes free from bewilderment. Nothing should be accepted blindly; everything should be accepted with care and with caution.

Of course, the philosophy can be manipulated to place emphasis where one desires, but, again, in light of our history, it is surely prudent for us to put the emphasis on care and caution.

(6) Milgram also argued that what critics of his work really objected to was the unflattering picture it drew of human nature rather than the deception or the methodology involved: Without a doubt Milgram hit dead center. The same motive lies at the heart of the GBC's objection to *Our Mission*. The book did not flatter them. Why should it? Flattery does not heal; it does not solve problems. Actually, flattery is offensive. This comes out in the story of Prthu Maharaja, when he was being praised for qualities he had not yet manifested. In spiritual life flattery really does not get us anywhere; indeed it does the opposite--it reinforces our illusion. As Srila Bhaktisiddhanta said, it leads to enjoyment but to no real well-being.

Reality is the best therapy for illusion. Our society is riddled with problems, and every last one can be traced back to the GBC, and the fact that the body abhors leadership by consensus. It abhors interdependency between the leaders and the led. The body does not take advantage of the senior devotees unless they are tacit yes men; and its conception of cooperation is all one way--top down. This is corporate culture. We are mandated for *varnasrama* culture. Even in corporate culture, top down management is passe. This is from the back cover of *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter M. Senge, a cutting-edge book on management that came out in 1990 :

Learning disabilities are tragic in children, but they are fatal in organizations. Because of them, few corporations live even half as long as a person--most die before they reach the age of forty. . . . The organizations that excel will be those that discover how to tap their people's commitment and capacity to learn at every level in the company.

Compare that with Prabhupada's words:

The Krsna consciousness movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action, not for making bureaucracy.

Both are saying the same thing. Without doubt one of the important traits of a learning organization will be the capacity to take feedback from the ranks. What is the point of complicating that process with homage and flattery, when homage and flattery are part of the problem? On this note, Machiavelli has something to contribute:

There is no other way of guarding one's self against flattery than by letting men understand that they will not offend you by speaking the truth.

This is surely a valuable bit of wisdom, but we like other of his ideas far better than this one. Intelligent men respect such a quality in a leader and want to go to his aid. The less intelligent become disrespectful, overly familiar. But should we orient our society towards fear of the less intelligent or towards fostering the intelligent?

About homage and flattery, besides noting that both ideas are contained in the word "hype" we should note that we have institutionalized it in ISKCON. Despite Prabhupada's warning in the *Caitanya-caritamrta* that excessive homage and flattery is "another type of blasphemy" we see it routinely practiced in the name of glorifying the Vaisnavas and the gurus in particular. The varieties of excessive homage and flattery is evident in any Vyaspuja book. Prabhupada said it is blasphemy, but we have decided it is devotional service.

(7) *The most frightening implication of the Milgram study is that half the population of North America is either sadistic or psychopathic, or both, which is clearly absurd:* It is surely difficult to believe that half the population may be sadistic or psychopathic. It could be latent. The frightening consideration for us, however, and the experience of several members of our society justifies this concern, is that many of our members and our leaders are drawn from the society that harbors all these potentially sadistic or psychopathic persons. With our emphasis on authority, how many of these persons are finding ISKCON a haven, where cruelty can be dovetailed or rationalized as obedience to authority and devotional service to God? This is something to ponder and perhaps study in-depth.

(8) *In fact, when similar studies were carried out in Rome, South Africa, Australia, and Munich, the level of obedience to the experimenter was rather greater than that obtained by Milgram:* Here is food for pondering. As shocking as the results were at Yale, in these other places an even greater percentage of people were willing to blindly obey. In Munich, a whopping 85 per cent of the people tested were fully obedient to the experimenter. Our international society can get no solace from these findings. We have the potential to draw the sado/psycho types from all corners of the globe. Unfortunately, the Germans come through true to form in this study. It would have been nice if they would have overturned the stereotype for being world-class blind followers. What percentage of our German *yatras*, for example, are recruited from the 85 per cent of the population?

(9) *Since over half the population in most countries is apparently prepared to administer very strong electric shocks to other people, then most of the obedient participants in Milgram-type studies must be quite ordinary people. The case of Adolf Eichmann, tried and convicted for ordering the deaths of thousands of Jews, is relevant here. The prosecution attempted to depict Eichmann as a sadistic monster, which seems reasonable enough in view of the enormity of his crimes. In actual fact his actions were in many ways those of an uninspired bureaucrat who simply sits at his desk and tries to carry out his job competently. . . . Hell is ordinary people. It is really the "ordinary" persons, the "little" people, (the Little Prabhu inside of all of us) desperate in their bid to escape from responsibility to think for themselves, who are the most gullible to irrational obedience. Being a little person does not refer to one's status in society or in an institution. One can be a great person from that point of view and still very much a little man, overcome with petty weakness of heart, like Arjuna before hearing the *Bhagavad-gita*. Ultimately it is the Little Prabhu in each of us that is the enemy. The difference between a *mahatma* and a *duratma* is whether or not we are under the thumb of the Little Prabhu.*

(10) *In our culture there is a lot of emphasis on the necessity of obeying authority, on the grounds that an efficient and well-organized society can only exist if there is a fairly stable hierarchy in which some people are given power and authority over others:* In our philosophy also the necessity for authority is emphasized. Between mainstream society and our Krsna consciousness movement, the conviction that submission to authority is essential for a stable community is probably equal. When compared, however, to the emphasis on obeying authority in our philosophy, the emphasis in mainstream society is virtually nonexistent. We can justify the need to make some into authorities, but we must not take it for granted that they will function as we intended. Power corrupts. One can start out sincere and get seduced along the way. Therefore there must be mechanisms to protect the integrity of the society as a whole, and the individual as well, from the corrupting potency of power.

(11) *Most societies attempt to ensure obedience by moving the obedient individual up a niche in the hierarchy. This is doubly a ingenious ploy, because the individual is rewarded for his obedience and feels motivated to climb to the next niche and the hierarchy itself is preserved and strengthened:* This is a fact; but it is not necessarily effective. Most hierarchical setups reward personnel for blind obedience--being yes-men--as opposed to open-eyed obedience or competence. The result: Everyone tends to rise to the level of their incompetence and the system is not strengthened, rather it weakens in two ways, (a) it alienates the intelligent and competent, and (b) it malfunctions due to the incompetence of the incompetent. The organization deteriorates slowly but predictably, like a cancer patient, and the group becomes dysfunctional.

(12) Are disobedient people different from obedient people? For example, one might imagine that men would be more likely to administer intense shocks than women: In reality, Milgram found "no difference in obedience between male and female participants." In another experiment 100 percent of the women shocked yelping and howling puppies. This is interesting as it reveals that the claim of the women's movement--that if women were running

the governments of the world there would be less aggression--is not, as they try to make it, an open and shut case. It also indicates that our trend in ISKCON to promote women to leading positions, while it may be politically correct, is not necessarily a solution to our problem of dynamics. Everything should be done with care and caution, both in the case of delegating women or men to positions of power. The most effective defense against abuse of power is resistance to blind following, independent thoughtfulness.

(13) Typically, however, better educated people are more likely to be disobedient, perhaps because they do not regard the experimenter as so intimidating: The obvious reason for this is that generally the educated can think for themselves and do not follow blindly. The interesting question for us is, what percentage of our members count as "better educated"? I've heard several guru-godbrothers lament over the caliber of less-intelligent men that become their disciples. As I've mentioned elsewhere, one GBC, *sannyasi*, guru, upon reading *Our Mission* said to me, "I don't think more than five percent of the devotees can understand your book." My reply was, "If that is true, Maharaja, then the situation is even worse than I'm saying in the book." Unfortunately, our gurus themselves perpetuate dynamics that only the less intelligent will abide. Intelligent people question. In the Third Canto Srila Prabhupada explains that doubt is a sign of intelligence. We abhor being questioned, however, so we recruit whom we attract.

Also, in considering resistance to blind following, we have to take into account the group dynamic, because peer pressure is a powerful force for coercing us. Being social animals, the sheep side of our nature induces us to conform willingly in order to belong. Thus one may easily subvert one's personal values just to be warm and fuzzy in the group.

We must also factor in the power of the philosophy to perhaps make even the better educated turn into righteous representatives of God or downright fanatics, what to speak of the average educated or the uneducated. "Righteous" is another word for irrational. In so many ways we may end up with dysfunctional or blind obedience.

(14) Common sense suggests that people with an authoritarian personality are more obedient than those of a more liberal disposition. Milgram tested this and found that obedient subjects had much more pronounced authoritarian attitudes than defiant subjects on a test of fascist tendencies (the 'F' Scale): The obedient authoritarian type is described by Erich Fromm as the sado-masochist, who is humble and submissive (obedient) to his authorities and sadistic to those under him. In our society, it is possible to finesse this in such a way that one rises to the top of the hierarchy. Then one can, figuratively speaking, don jackboots, kick in doors, stomp on his comrades and godbrothers as a service to the Absolute Truth, Krsna, the village boy, who is the epitome of loving personal dealings towards His devotees. The marvel of this is that the glaring inconsistency does not dawn on the stompers; and often not on the stomped as well. They are convinced that they are making spiritual advancement by being humiliated for Krsna.

We must not fail to note that participants in dysfunctional obedience circumstances have a capacity to dehumanize their victims, to treat people as things, not as persons. This is the mentality of the authoritarian character, who Milgram found has a predilection to blindly obey. It is impersonalism, which the perpetrator justifies to his conscience by feeling like a helpless cog. Or may be himself the victim of a grandiose self-conception in which he fancies himself absolute. Either type has the ability to distance themselves from any sense of personal responsibility for their actions. Former GBC-Jagadisha dasa has referred to this practice of evading responsibility by the leaders in our society. And the experiment found that this is easier if one is not in physical proximity to the person or persons one is condemning.

The popularity of e-mail in ISKCON has given an added dimension to impersonal dealings. Leaders can discuss the fate of other members of the society without the person being privy to the discussion. This is the ideal circumstance for the one-sided dynamic that typifies the authoritarian scenario, and practiced in ISKCON for years. The US constitution promises a

swift trial, but our practice takes the concept to extremes. Instead of a sober hearing we get swift "justice" in *rajo-guna* on e-mail, using everything in Krsna's service.

Milgram was pessimistic about the prospects of an enlightened future for mankind after his study: "The capacity for man to abandon his humanity, indeed the inevitability that he does so, as he merges his unique personality into the larger institutional structures. . . is the fatal flaw nature has designed into us, and which in the long run gives our species only a modest chance for survival."

Does Milgram's view apply with equal force to our Krsna consciousness movement? Having researched the matter of group dynamics and seeing how much work we have to do to rectify our encumbered system in ISKCON, I must confess that am also pessimistic at times: We have only a modest chance of survival *unless we face the problem of our dynamics*. If we insist on cosmetic changes, but cling to the leaders and sheep formula, always putting the institution before the individual, as shown in the chapter "A Diagnosis," thus causing the individual to merge into the larger institutional structure, there is no telling in how many ways we can undermine the mission of Lord Caitanya by our dysfunctional dynamics.

Of course, because of having many external symbols in place, we may be convinced we are on the progressive path of *bhakti*. Maya is always eager to present us with the illusion of progress out of illusion. ISKCON does not have to shut down in order to fail. ISKCON fails if we do not grow towards becoming finer human beings and unalloyed pure devotees of Krsna. The situation can be changed, if we begin to practice Krsna consciousness from the inside-out; if we train our devotees to be independently thoughtful and to take responsibility for what goes on in *their* society; if, instead of telling them what is reality and what is illusion, we train them to determine for themselves what is Krsna conscious by being in touch with their conscience; if we train them never to go against their conscience. Then they can cooperate according to the level of their realization or faith. Dysfunctional obedience gives only one result--both the leaders and subordinates are victims of maya.

Chapter Six - Alienation as Self-estrangement

The biggest danger, that of losing oneself, can pass off in the world as quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc., is bound to be noticed. (Kierkegaard)

Milgram wanted to see if proximity to the victim would affect the rate of obedience. He found that the more remote the victim, the higher the number of people willing to give the maximum shock of 450 volts. At the remotest level, the victim could be neither heard nor seen, though his pounding on the wall could be heard, and sixty-six percent of the participants went to the maximum of 450 volts.

At the closest level, one and a half feet, and to give shocks above the 150 volt level, the subject had to physically force the victims hand onto the shockplate. Still, 30 percent gave the full voltage. Thus even the lowest percentage shattered expectations of psychiatrists, who predicted that a mere 3.73 percent would administer the full shock.

These findings confirm common sense by proving that it is much easier to "punish" someone remote, who is inaudible and invisible. It is also much easier to bomb people by push-button, or, as we often use the example, to buy meat in the supermarket, than to kill, skin, and gut the animal oneself. Distance favors the doing of ghastly deeds. To do dirty work by phone is easier than to do it in person; and it is even easier to do it through another person, because one is yet further alienated or estranged from the deed, and alienated from responsibility for the deed.

Point to ponder: If we have authoritarianism (which in human relations translates into emotional distance), plus being alienated from a situation by physical distance (because often our highest authorities are in other parts of the world), what percentage of our devotees would blindly punish another to the full extent of their power?

And, don't forget this spine-chilling thought: That our punisher, unlike Milgram's subjects, would be acting, not on behalf of Yale University, but in the conviction that he was acting on behalf of God.

II

As the title of this chapter indicates, there is another sense in which alienation is to be understood. In *The Sane Society*, Erich Fromm gives a specialized use of the word--alienation in the sense of being lost or estranged from one's self--as the Kierkegaard quote explains. Fromm's analysis turns out to be a powerful explanation of Prabhupada's statement, "As soon as there is bureaucracy the whole thing will be spoiled":

By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts--but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person.

Alienated persons are generally not conscious of their psychological state of being out of touch, of being lost to themselves. This loss, however, is not the worst part of the alienated experience. Until the alienated begin healing their condition, which generally requires a crisis, they think themselves very much in touch. They think they think. We shall see that what passes as thinking for an alienated person, is not thinking at all, for the mere presence of thoughts, the stream of consciousness, is not what we mean by "thinking."

In a future volume we shall discuss how the voice of external authority can be internalized by the alienated person to such a degree that it replaces the voice of conscience. Such a person gives a new dimension to the word *selfless*. Instead of meaning "without selfish motive," it means "without a self," without a conscience. He or she "thinks," but the thoughts are not their own.

Incidentally, alien originally meant an insane person. In French and Spanish, *aliene* and *alienado*, meant a psychotic, the most extremely alienated person. Marx and Hegel used "alienation" to describe a form of self-estrangement, in which persons act reasonably in practical matters, but are still the agent for severe dysfunctional patterns that impacts the social body or organization in which they participate. Henceforth, throughout this book, this is very much the sense in which the word is used.

One might say that alienated persons are the functionally insane, as opposed to the totally insane, which most societies lock away. Generally, outside of psychiatric circles, society does not recognize that ultimately the functional insane, the alienated, wreak more havoc than the totally insane, because, in a manner of speaking, they work undercover. This is a significant consideration if we harbor alienated members in our Krsna consciousness movement; and we do. Prabhupada called them "mundane persons in the dress of Vaisnavas."

III

The concept of alienation as estrangement from one's own self is probably as old as the history of the human race. Fromm argues that it dates back to the Old Testament, except there it was referred to as idolatry. In idolatry the main psychological function worshippers experience is that they produce an idol out of their own effort, but as something apart from themselves, over them, which they worship and to which they submit. *"The idol represents his own life-forces in an alienated form."* This manmade god then has power over the worshiper. Man's idolatry has served to disempower him because he projected all of himself into his idol and presumes this to be piety, religion, spirituality.

In devotional service we worship the *arca-murti*, the Deity form of the Lord that is authorized by sastra. Our worshipable Deity is not a concoction. We do not practice idolatry, but this is not the central consideration in the alienation process. The main issue in alienation is not the practice of idolatry as such, *but the attitude of projecting all one's being outside one's self.* This question, then, is relevant: Can this transference of one's self still happen in a person practicing Krsna consciousness, by, say, projecting our being into the Deity (though not an idol), or unto our guru, or unto the institution itself?

At a glance, the answer seems to be negative. The practice of disempowering oneself by projecting one's being elsewhere is obviously at odds with the very notion of self-realization and the way we are supposed to develop through the practice of bhakti--especially for becoming empowered, utilizing our life, wealth, intelligence, and words for His service. There is no room for alienation in this dynamic.

When we grasp fully the concept of alienation as is being discussed here, however, we can appreciate that it is entirely possible to be on the path of Krsna consciousness yet be completely alienated, for it has nothing to do with the particular belief system one professes. Rather alienation results from the attitude of the individual and the experience that flows from that attitude.

IV

Also relevant is that while it is easy to see how idolatrous or primitive religions openly cause alienation, they do not have a monopoly on the alienation process. Many monotheistic religions degenerate into serving an alienation function, because man has the power within himself to love and to reason. When he projects all that unto God, he empties himself. He makes himself an utter nothing. . .

he does not feel them any more as his own powers, and then he prays to God to give him back some of what he, man, has projected unto God. In early Protestantism and Calvinism, the required religious attitude is that man *should* feel himself empty and impoverished, and put his trust in the grace of God, that is, into the hope that God may return to him part of his own qualities, which he has put into God.

No doubt Krsna consciousness can be approached in the same way as the Calvinists or Protestants did. Again, it is a question of how one views the religious experience, how one understands surrender--as a groveling, impoverished, depleted supplicant, or as an empowered agent coming in parampara, feeling fully the "power to" do something with one's energies on

the Lord's behalf. Look at Srila Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. Which of these two versions did they embody? In fact this "power to" concept is standard Krsna consciousness teaching, but is it our standard practice?

In answer to this question, let us look at the testimony of two devotees, the is from the Foreword. The italicized parts are the clues to the authors disempowered and alienated condition:

It was in 1989 at the Vyaspuja of my spiritual master that I found myself deeply pondering my life, my 12 years in the movement. *It struck me that I was not going anywhere.* I felt annoyed and uncertain about what to do. At that time I thought of myself in these terms: *"I am going nowhere. I feel like a dog chasing its own tail. I have not moved an inch in many years."* I was feeling frustrated, as if a lot of time had been wasted, as if a significant portion of my life had not been properly utilized.

I wondered. But, of course, I consoled myself, that *this frustration was itself the price I had to pay to advance in spiritual life, that this frustration of not achieving anything would mature into complete detachment from the material world,* and that my feelings that I was not moving at all in Krsna consciousness was only apparent, *for by not achieving anything in this life, I would have nothing to be attached to,* and therefore at the end, surely, I will go to the spiritual world.

Prabhupada never advocated a non-productive life in Krsna consciousness. How, then, did this devotee arrive at the notion that by achieving nothing in this life he would qualify to enter the spiritual world? He has a guru, but after 12 years his conception is how to be a zero. Fortunately he woke up from this condition. Waking up took two more years. How many are in his shoes and are not articulating it? And, how many are in his shoes and think they are doing just fine?

The next testimony is from a letter by Jagadish dasa after he quit his position as a guru and *sannyasi* in ISKCON. After explaining his perception that we somehow live in a "bubble of illusion" when we should be "living closer to reality," he made these points that are classic alienation dynamics:

... when one acts in the jurisdiction of the "institution" (as a "surrendered soul"), then one tends not to take responsibility for one's actions. This works in at least three ways. (1) Whatever I do, the result, if something goes wrong, is not my fault (although if things go well I'm happy to take the credit). (2) One thinks, "I can do anything for Krsna" (without considering all the possible consequences). (3) One doesn't learn how to deliberate thoroughly and responsibly to make decisions about what to do and what not to do in one's life.

Next is Jagadish's account from another letter telling how he was "thinged" from the onset of his spiritual life in ISKCON and how it led to him being alienated precisely in the sense that we are discussing here:

I joined the Krsna consciousness movement when I was 19 years old. For some time I had been searching for spiritual illumination and a guru, as as soon as I came in touch with the chanting and the philosophy I knew that I wanted Krsna

consciousness. I was ready to join the devotees and help in Prabhupada's mission.

I was still 20 years old when the temple asked me if I wanted to get married. I said no. He asked me again some days afterward. Again I said no, but asked why he wanted to know. He said there was a girl coming to the temple and she should be married. (This was certainly a speculation--either his or someone else's--that girls should be married as soon as they wanted to join. I was so naive that I just accepted that this was the proper way to do things in Krsna consciousness.). . .

Soon after, as I got to know this person, I realized that this was going to be a very difficult relationship. I had no idea, however, that I could change my mind and call off the plans to marry her. . . .

At this point, I would like to try to explain something about my internal life. . . People often tell me that they think I am unaffected by or even callous toward them, when actually I feel quite moved by what's happening. I have learned how to deny and spit at my emotional needs and experiences, and don't know how to express what I feel.

This is as close as one can get to expressing experience of alienation from self. Unfortunately, it is only possible when one comes out of it, as Jagadisha has. Those still lost to themselves, have no idea of the loss. Maya is powerful in ways we have yet to conceive. The become as Srila Bhaktisiddhanta describes:

Worldly people possess a double nature. They express one kind of sentiment but internally cherish a different purpose. Moreover, they want to advertise this duplicity as a mark of liveness or love of harmony. Those who are unwilling to show any duplicity, wish to be frank and straightforward, or in other words to exercise unambiguously the function of the soul; such really sincere persons are called sectarian and orthodox by those who practice duplicity. We will cultivate the society only of those who are straightforward. We will not keep company with any person who is not so. We must by all means avoid bad company. We are advised to keep at a distance of a hundred cubits from animals of the horned species. We should preserve the same caution in regard to all insincere persons.

Their double nature is due to alienation from conscience. Sometimes we think it is so difficult to discriminate between a real devotee and a fake, but here Srila Bhaktisiddhanta has drawn the line and made it as simplified as possible, if only we will apply his wisdom: that the insincere should be avoided at all costs and to know who is insincere is simply a matter of whether or not one experiences a person as straightforward or duplicitous.

We can go on citing for pages examples from my own experience and testimony from others, but I leave it to the honest reader to reckon the truth of the matter as far as their personal experience and the dynamics of the society as a whole. In a later chapter we shall see several testimonials by devotees that indicate the alienation process at work. Are we by and large urging members towards self-estrangement on the path of self-realization?

Kapiladeva gave us a hint of the possibility of alienation for one even on the path of Krsna consciousness (SB. 3.29.22):

*yo mam sarvesu bhutesu
santam atmanam isvaram
hitvarcam bhajate maudhyad
bhasmany eva juhotti sah*

One who worships the Deity of Godhead in the temples but does not know that the Supreme Lord, as Paramatma, is situated in every living entity's heart, must be in ignorance and is compared to one who offers oblations into ashes.

Srila Prabhupada comments:

Since the individual soul is part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, in that sense the Lord is living in every body, and, as Supersoul, the Lord is also present as a witness. In both cases the presence of God in every living entity is essential. Therefore persons who profess to belong to some religious sect but who do not feel the presence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in every living entity, and everywhere else, are in the mode of ignorance.

If, without this preliminary knowledge of the Lord's omnipresence, one simply attaches himself to the rituals in a temple, church or mosque, it is as if he were offering butter into ashes rather than into the fire. One offers sacrifices by pouring clarified butter into a fire and chanting Vedic mantras, but even if there are Vedic mantras and all conditions are favorable, if the clarified butter is poured on ashes, then such a sacrifice will be useless. In other words, a devotee should not ignore any living entity. The devotee must know that in every living entity, however insignificant he may be, even in an ant, God is present, and therefore every living entity should be kindly treated and should not be subjected to any violence.

V

Regardless of our rhetoric, if one's self-conception is that one is powerless, one will have the very same experience of "thinging" oneself and one's neighbor and the Lord. This happens when we misconstrue that humility means to make oneself a zero, which is, unfortunately, the understanding of many devotees. They forget that an *amsa* of the Absolute Truth, though infinitesimal by comparison to the Supreme, when compared to nothing the infinitesimal jiva is considerably more than zero. They inwardly try to obliterate themselves, but this they cannot do; however the resultant frustration, along with other factors, alienates them from themselves.

If we mistakenly seek to be disempowered, considering it the real thing, then our every act of worship is another step on the path of alienation from the self. Krsna consciousness is not a matter of performing the rituals of puja; it is a matter of the consciousness in which the puja or any other service is done. It is horrifying to consider that we can be moving away from, instead of towards, self-realization; and this can happen without us being aware that we have suffered a grievous loss--our self.

We must stress here, however, that *puja* is not the only scenario that can be a vehicle for alienation. The same alienation takes place when people make themselves powerless by "falling *helplessly* or *blindly* in love"; or, as in the case of Nazism, fall helplessly or blindly in love with the state. Indeed, all fanaticism is but the phenomenon of alienation. We might as well add that sentimentality is also the phenomenon of alienation, because fanaticism and

sentimentality spring from the same place--an unreasoned or irrational belief in something--be it a social, political, or religious cause. One can have such a belief in Krsna consciousness. We have ample opportunity for this helpless, blind, falling in love type phenomenon in our stress on guru. If we become blind followers "out of love" we not only fail to experience the object of love as a full-fledged person, we also fail to experience ourselves in full, as the bearer of productive human powers. We can only love our neighbor to the degree that we love ourselves.

Devotees struggling to understand and cope with their feelings of being alienated sometimes indicate their misunderstanding of the empowered experience of Krsna consciousness when they ask questions like, "If we are supposed to become humbler than a blade of grass, what happens to the person, me?" The devotee is assuming that "humbler than a blade of grass" means zero. The question comes from one who is already on the way to feeling lost to one's self.

Contrast this condition with our own dear Srila Prabhupada, who is the role model of the transcendental demeanor for all of us, including his grand-disciples. He was humble, as we all know, yet he was powerful. No one could wipe their feet on Srila Prabhupada. Nothing about Prabhupada was disempowered, and our duty is to follow his spirit. He said, "'Like father, like son,' you should be."

VI

Ascertaining if one is on the alienated path or not pivots on this question: Subjectively, does one feel empowered or disempowered by religious experience? If one feels disempowered, one is probably alienated. Two people can be side by side in the act of worshipping the Deity and one can be alienated and the other not, depending on the subjective attitude of each. Before going further, we must clarify use of the words empowered and disempowered, because we speak of empowerment in the philosophy as well, referring to a mystical transaction between the Lord and His devotee, but this not the same sense as being used here. Feeling empowered in this context means feeling confident and able to cope, to use one's energies to respond productively to life. Disempowerment entails the opposite, feeling enfeebled, faint hearted, unable to cope or respond practically to life. In Bhagavad-gita, Arjuna starts out as a disempowered person. He was practically having a nervous breakdown. By the end he is transformed. He's firm, and free from doubt and delusion, and ready to fight. He is empowered. This is the legitimate experience of the effect of Krsna consciousness on any devotee.

If one does not experience this minimal sense of empowerment in the Krsna consciousness movement, especially after a year or so of association with devotees, the chances are one is getting the wrong experience externally, and, consequently, the wrong experience internally as well. Some believe that the sort of empowerment under discussion is only valid after several years of hearing the philosophy, chanting, and doing service etc. This view, unfortunately, stems from those already alienated. Legitimate contact with realized preaching of the philosophy begins enlightening and empowering the hearer on the spot. Devotees who had contact with Srila Prabhupada know well that this was their experience.

Prabhupada could paint the picture of Krsna consciousness in a few deft strokes and put you right into it. You felt that it was accessible, attainable, and no false humility was necessary. He made Krsna consciousness a very matter of fact thing. Unfortunately, somehow, this is now a rarity in our society. Why? *Listen, Little Prabhu* details the many possibilities.

VII

I cannot stress enough how central is the role of alienation in causing dysfunctional dynamics. More worrisome is the realization that bureaucratic systems gives rise to alienation, which is really a manifestation of impersonalism, because once we experience ourselves as "things" we "thing" everyone else. If I am not a person, then no one is a person. This does not have to be a

matter of conscious thought. It springs automatically from the depths of the alienated being, unaware of the loss of self.

When Lord Jesus Christ said "Love thy neighbor as thyself" he was giving the essential remedy for alienation, for the alienated person is afflicted with self-loathing. (The psychological mechanisms of how this self-loathing comes about will be explored in volume four of the *Our Mission* series). Self-love comes in two varieties. One is with a conscience and the other without.

Persons experiencing genuine self-love are in touch with themselves. They display an overall consistent integrity that allows them to live with a clear conscience. If they make a mistake they can own it and do the needful to apologize and if possible rectify it. They have no trouble respecting others and cannot treat either themselves or others as things, for they are grounded in their conscience. If they make a mistake, they soon regret it. They live from the inside-out. In contrast, those consumed by the self-love called narcissism--an extreme form of concern for self and disregard for others--are essentially conscienceless. They are alienated from themselves. They are caught up in externals and live life on the outside. They can be so seriously alienated that they cannot even appreciate what the non-alienated mean when describing alienation. The reason is simple: One is lost to oneself, but completely unaware of the loss. Being lost to the self, is mentioned in *Bhagavad-gita* (16.9), *nastatmanah*, as a demonic symptom and one can see why. This is a profoundly difficult malady to detect and to eradicate. As stated before, generally it takes a severe crisis in life to bring one face to face with the condition.

VIII

Two individuals can be in ISKCON yet have an entirely different experience. For one person, there is growth, a natural and progressive coming in to his full capacity to perform acts of love and radiate reason, an empowered sense of responding to life, the capacity to act without hesitancy, self-doubt, and confusion. For another, there is alienation, as he turns himself into a thing, his neighbor into a thing, and construes that this intellectually depleted, powerless state is the experience of devotion to Kṛṣṇa, surrender.

Of course, as an institution it is not possible to take absolute responsibility for the individual, but our challenge is how to set in motion an atmosphere that favors the empowering experience over the disempowering one. With Srila Prabhupada we had the empowering version, but we fumbled and dropped the ball. Indeed, we did not know what the ball was. We still don't. Therefore, we have not been working to fulfill the most important of Prabhupada's desires--training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action, which is the empowered response to life.

Some may question my saying that this is the most important of Prabhupada's desires, citing that more important is preaching and spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, making pure devotees. Actually there is no conflict here. To make a person free from doubt and delusion, Kṛṣṇa conscious, a pure devotee, is to train that person to be independently thoughtful. Bhakti is not awarded to the sentimental, the slavish, the artificially humble, the disempowered. Bhakti is awarded to those who can distinguish reality from illusion, and can act in this world without hesitancy to fulfill the mission of the Lord. This requires independent thoughtfulness, so there is no conflict in saying that training such souls is Prabhupada's most important desire. He said himself, "If I can make one moon and not millions of stars my mission is a success."

Alienation fosters the opposite number, disempowerment. Stars in the millions, perhaps, but no moons. It's a roundabout type of impersonalism, which is a deep contaminant in the hearts of conditioned souls. Impersonalism does not necessarily have to be one's professed doctrine, by lifetimes of material conditioning we are contaminated with impersonal attitudes that obstruct our progress in *bhakti*.

We may not openly profess impersonalism, but we still have to look for the strains of it in our hearts and uproot it. That is why in the *Sandarbhās*, Srila Jiva Gosvami, after warning that his

book is only for devotees who want to render service at the lotus feet of Krsna, he nevertheless repeatedly demolishes various elements of impersonalism throughout the book. He's not instructing his reader how to defeat the impersonalists; he is preaching to the *sadhakas* about the impersonalism within their hearts which impedes their progress in Krsna consciousness. By directing us how to be more in touch with ourselves, he is preaching against alienation.

Chapter Seven - Alienation Via Our Irrational Strivings

*There was a fellow called tranquil
He walked the incompetence treadmill
He kept his eyes on the spiritual skies
But all the while he was moving downhill*

When we mistakenly think that the genuine experience of Krsna consciousness makes us powerless, we have entered the realm of self-estranged beings. It is then impossible to understand or experience oneself as the center from which acts of love and reason radiate. In the previous chapter it was mentioned in passing that those too much absorbed in loving themselves cannot love another. Yet those who do not love themselves are also incapable of loving another. When Jesus recommended loving love our neighbor as ourselves (which is our teaching also: *atmavat sarva bhutesu*), he gave an instruction crucial to personal realization of God, because *one who has no experience of love is incapable of loving another*.

Alienation from one's self is, then, one of the most telling symptoms of this inability to love another. It is actually disempowering, although the person in the experience may present himself as empowered. The ultimate scheme in maya's bag of tricks is to give us the illusion of progress out of illusion. One has to be alert to detect the signs of alienation in oneself and in others. Here is an example of alienation at work. Note Srila Prabhupada's response to it (Bombay 1977):

Prabhupada: Everyone of us is messiah. Anyone Krsna conscious, he's the messiah. Everyone. Why? All of us *gaurangera bhakta-gane, jane jane sakti dhari brahmanando tair saksi*, "The devotee of Lord Caitanya, everyone has so immense power that everyone, they can deliver the whole universe."
Tamal Krsna: Only you are that powerful, Srila Prabhupada. We're like. . .
Prabhupada: Why you are not? You are my disciples.
Tamal Krsna: . . . We are like bugs.
Prabhupada: Like father, like son. You should be. *Gaurangera bhakta-gane*. Everyone. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, *amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa*. He asked everyone, "Just become guru." Follow His example. Bas. Everything is there in *Bhagavad-gita*. You simply repeat. That's all. You

become guru. To become guru is not difficult job. Follow Caitanya Mahaprabhu and speak what Krsna has said. Bas. You become guru.

Of course, "simply repeat" assumes that one understands what he is repeating. Not that we become parrots. That is also a disempowered orientation. But just see how Prabhupada immediately reacted to his disciple disempowering himself while in the very act of glorifying the spiritual master. This is an excellent example of the alienation process taking place, in which we promote our leader, master, or whatever to the level of an inaccessible god, disguising it as humility. It is the Little Prabhu syndrome. And look at the line that Prabhupada was preaching: "The devotee of Lord Caitanya, everyone, has so immense power that everyone, they can deliver the whole universe." Whereas he preached to us to inspire in us "power to" do service, we preach with a slant of "power over" the other person. Who is preaching along Prabhupada's lines in our society today?

Most "preaching" is to deify Prabhupada and create dependency in the younger devotees by shrinking them. We have many who imitate certain aspects of Srila Prabhupada, but who is in his fearless and empowering mood? And non-rubberstamped godbrothers or grand-disciples that are not in the dependent mode--owing to not being alienated--are either "envious" or simply made to feel unwelcome. The irony of this situation is that it is a repeat of what Prabhupada went through with the Gaudiya Math. We certainly learn from history. Unfortunately, the chief lesson we learn is that we do not learn from history.

II

What about alienation to the institution? What if the individual by joining ISKCON understands that "Now I must abdicate all my rights unto the International Society for Krsna Consciousness. I lay my head in the lap of ISKCON. I surrender." Is that alienation or not? Indeed it is. One replaces Krsna the all-powerful with ISKCON the all-powerful, thinking this the manifestation of sincerity, love, and cooperation for Srila Prabhupada. Such a person will surrender their intelligence rather than surrender through their intelligence. When we give up feeling full responsibility for ourselves in the devotional service of the Lord, thinking that is surrender, we feel like a cog in a wheel, instead of feeling like a messiah, as Prabhupada described in the quote above: "The devotee of Lord Caitanya, everyone has so immense power that everyone, they can deliver the whole universe."

When alienation to the institution occurs, ISKCON looms large over the life of the individual. The institution, instead of engendering a sense of "power to" in members, has "power over" them. Actually it should facilitate our service and growth. It should cause us to expand, not shrink. The individual should be made to feel that the institution exists purely to serve his spiritual needs, otherwise alienation has begun.

And for many, many devotees, having come to the movement at a young age, when idealism is high and they are not fully individuated, fully mature persons, this is precisely what happens. I know this from my own experience. I remember several years ago a *sannyasi* was visiting the Baltimore temple and he complimented a new bhakta to me. "This is how I like them, when they do what you say and ask no questions." This is the attitude of the alienated person. He is saying, "I like when the new devotee is a thing."

When I joined ISKCON, it was nothing short of falling deeply blindly, madly in love. ISKCON became everything and everything else was nothing. My commitment to ISKCON was much larger than my commitment to perform acts of love and to radiate reason, if that somehow put me at odds with the institution. In short, I became alienated.

That trend is more pronounced now than ever. The institution, not the individual's growth in the process of *bhakti*, is getting more and more emphasis. This is amply proven in several upcoming chapters. One ends up professing the scriptural ideal, but incapable of enacting it in

a profound way, because ultimately the institution becomes the master, not the teachings themselves.

Indeed, earlier this year (1996), an initiation ceremony was held in New Govardhan, Australia, in which the guru had the new initiate vow never to leave ISKCON. Alienation began right there at the moment of initiation. This is unfortunate for the individual and for the "guru" who misunderstands the true dynamic of Krsna consciousness. Prabhupada himself said that one can be his disciple outside of ISKCON as long as one follows the vows, indicating that our primary commitment is to the process of *bhakti*, to the *parampara*, not to the institution. Today, that perspective is all but lost. We have put the institution before the process, before Prabhupada's own spirit and mood. And all this is done in his name.

III

Fromm discusses another aspect of alienation that must not be overlooked here. Alienation also happens in relationship to oneself, when one is subject to irrational passions:

The person who is mainly motivated by his lust for power, does not experience himself any more in the richness and limitlessness of a human being, but he becomes a slave to the partial striving in him, which is projected into external aims, by which he is "possessed."

Do we know people like this in our society--obsessed with or possessed by achieving position, power, influence--and having achieved these irrational strivings desperately cling to them no matter what?

Do we have godbrothers, for example, who would not stay in this mission unless Prabhupada had given them a position? Prabhupada said we do. He said they should be completely neglected. First we have to detect them, then neglect them. When Prabhupada said this movement could only be destroyed from within, he was referring to such prisoners of their irrational passions being in our society and manipulating the whole society to gratify their private agenda.

Here is an example of a good candidate for being alienated by his irrational passions: One GBC godbrother, in a letter to the body defending his interest in *raganuga* topics, wrote the following:

As the senior and only remaining original member of the GBC (along with H.H. Jagadish Goswami), I stand as the number one target for all of ISKCON's detractors. They are praying for me to fall down to prove that ISKCON and the GBC are a failure. That's how much they identify me with Srila Prabhupada's movement and the GBC. I am sure they'll all dance in the street when they hear that one of our own GBC members is now calling for my resignation.

But here is my answer to them and to all of you as well: I am not resigning! Due to the influence of *raganuga bhakti*, I am now twice as competitive, manipulative, nasty and political as I was before. And its now on the spontaneous platform!

... This is my 25th year on the GBC. If Krsna wills, I'll serve another 25 years and then retire gracefully. Allow me that dignity. I am sure Prabhupada would.

Amazing. This is alienation par excellence. Apart from the faulty logic that his falldown will prove ISKCON and the GBC a failure, how does he reconcile his complete dedication to

raganuga-bhakti and his insistence that he will not resign as GBC. What genuine candidate for *raganuga* would not welcome the chance to quit the GBC and devote himself to his true spiritual insight?

Not this writer. Rather he threatens the whole society with 25 more years of his obsession with power. Unabashedly. And an increase: "I am now twice as competitive, manipulative, nasty and political as I was before." And in the next breath he wants to retire gracefully. And on the spontaneous platform, too. Where is the grace and dignity in his outlook? How much more lost to one's self can one get?

He admits that he was nasty, political, etc., in the past. Perhaps his detractors want him to fall down owing to his record, rather than to see ISKCON and the GBC fail. His response is to up the ante, but from his own words it makes sound sense that his detractors would feel this way. Also, it is likely that they don't identify this writer with Prabhupada's movement as such, but with the irrational dynamics which they want to eliminate.

Anyway, even with his own words in black and white, who will believe this goes on in the hallowed halls of power among "advanced" devotees in the Krsna consciousness movement, the society of the most intelligent Vaisnava saints, representatives of the Gosvamis, representatives of Lord Caitanya? Of course, when something is just too amazing it is difficult to believe. A good example is that it took America years to believe the atrocities against humanity going on in Hitler's concentration camps. It was just so unimaginable. Still today there are people who doubt that the holocaust happened. One can therefore appreciate how difficult it is to believe the absurd dynamics in ISKCON. Incidentally, this letter writer is the same person whose lecture is analyzed in the chapter called "A Knock 'em Dead Lecture."

If we are serious to practice the brahminical quality of wisdom, one of the essential things we must learn is that we need to revamp our understanding of fall down. A person who is driven by irrational strivings is already fallen. Our present working conception of fall down is a too simplistic. Consequently, ISKCON has been victimized several times by the fallen, the personally ambitious. This writer says that his detractors want him to fall down, but one who knows this philosophy has no doubt that from Krsna's point of view this person is already quite fallen. Indeed, Prabhupada said about him that "I have noted, he does not have the heart of a Vaisnava." But we do not neglect such people. We elevate them to the realm of inaccessible gods so we can respect them. Worse, instead of modelling ourselves after our stalwart acaryas, we seek to emulate them.

The difficulty is that we are more sentimental than hard-headed realists in our approach to Krsna consciousness. This is because at heart we are competing to be the most advanced. We think hard-headed realism puts us at odds with advanced Krsna consciousness. Not so.

Prabhupada's said it again and again, that the preacher's duty is to discriminate.

If the above letter was meant as a joke, it was not the least bit funny, considering the time, place, and circumstance. In any event, no one who read it at the time thought it a joke.

Absurd, yes. Joke, no. Those who know the author's history in ISKCON will not find it amusing at any time, in any place, or in any circumstance.

IV

Such persons, possessed by their passionate strivings, are the worst association. Their striving is their idol--not Krsna, not *prema*, not Srila Prabhupada's service, not *raganuga-bhakti*, not any of the virtues by which they rationalize their irrational passions. As Srila Bhaktisiddhanta said:

Worldly people possess a double nature. They express one kind of sentiment but internally cherish a different purpose. . . . How will our purpose be served with the help of persons who possess a double nature? There is no correspondence between what they say and do. The tidings that the sweet and

healthy words of our Sri Gurudeva has brought us will not be listened to by persons who have a double tongue.

To him others are tools, things, means to an end. Fromm writes:

His actions are not his own; while he is under the illusion of doing what he wants, he is driven by forces which are separated from his self, which work behind his back; he is a stranger to himself, just as his fellow man is a stranger to him. He experiences the other and himself not as what they really are, but distorted by the unconscious forces which operate in them.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta has also discussed given his verdict about such persons:

We will cultivate the society only of those who are straightforward. We will not keep company with any person who is not so. We must by all means avoid bad company. We are advised to keep at a distance of a hundred cubits from animals of the horned species. We should preserve the same caution in regard to all insincere persons.

One aspect of this lust for power that the insincere embody is that having impoverished themselves by the alienation process, in order to get back some sense of self-worth, they may try is to "possess" others. The alienated fall into different categories. Some are simply using the institution. Others are possessed by some person or the institution, or both. They in turn try to possess things and people (who are also things to them). Virtual disciplic chains of alienated persons are formed and the real *parampara* is lost. Maya is such serious business. The person bent on possessing others in the name of Krsna consciousness is obviously "the mundane person in the dress of a Vaisnava." What a great misfortune when such an alienated person passes for an advanced devotee and rises to the pinnacle of power in an institution in which position is equated with spiritual advancement. Worse still, in order to achieve the perfection of life, to be freed from the horrors of repeated birth and death, one is called upon to obey this prisoner of his irrational passions. One is asked to show one's love for our founder-*acarya* by cooperating with the servant, not of the Lord, but of his irrational strivings, his *anarthas*.

For such persons--pitifully lost to themselves--godbrothers, disciples, the institution, guru, and even Krsna Himself are but means to an end, mere rungs or stepping stones. And as we shall see, because we have completely neglected Prabhupada's instructions regarding such persons, we have several of them in key positions in our society.

V

The alienated person is disempowered spiritually, but it does not mean he or she has no bureaucratic position or power within the institution. They may be powerful in the organization and exert control over the lives of thousands, who are also on the path to alienation, because one can only lead others to where he is situated, to one's level of realization, or lack of it. To spread Krsna consciousness one must first spread it to oneself. If one is lost to oneself, how can one elevate others to self-realization?

Having such irrational, alienated persons as absolute authorities, can only work against them and, naturally, against our mission as well. As long as we maintain irrational authorities in the institution, it can only aid the destabilizing dysfunctional dynamics, because such authorities have a private agenda and all others are but "things" in their eyes. They can destroy the

movement from within. The movement may be already destroyed, to the degree that it is "possessed" by irrational men, mundaners, though the guise of it being Prabhupada's mission may remain intact. This possibility has to be carefully assessed. We should not accept anything blindly, conversely, we should reject nothing blindly either.

VI

Once we experience ourselves as alienated, as impoverished from our own richness and power, as things, we must now depend on powers outside ourselves to give worth to our lives. This can apply even to persons who read good books like Covey's *Seven Habits*, wherein we are encouraged to become inside-out individuals, guided by our conscience, but even this knowledge is incorporated into the alienated man's toolkit. Covey himself was aware of this. Thus he wrote in his introduction:

If I try to use human influence strategies and tactics how to get other people to do what I want, to work better, to be more motivated, to like me and each other--while my character is fundamentally flawed, marked by duplicity and insincerity--then in the long run, I cannot be successful. My duplicity will breed distrust, and everything I do--even using so-called good human relations techniques--will be perceived as manipulative. It simply makes no difference how good the rhetoric is or even how good the intentions are; if there is little or no trust there is no foundation for permanent success. Only basic goodness gives life to technique.

"Basic goodness" encompasses truthfulness, self-respect, respect for others, straightforward dealings, sincerity, and so on, the brahminical qualifications. In this connection, coming to the end of his physical presence, Srila Prabhupada gave this advice to us, which is featured in the video movie, *The Final Lesson*:

If we engage in devotional service we get a different nature. And if we engage on the basis of sense gratification the result is bad. . . Therefore, we should always seek good association, devotee association. . . So if we have the chance of association with devotees, then our character, nature becomes better. . . How to bring people to *sattva-guna*? With brahminical qualifications, very neat and clean, rise early in the morning, see *mangala arotika*; in this way to stay in *sattva-guna*.

The brahminical qualifications are all impossible when we are self-estranged, though we will not hesitate to enlist the philosophy to serve our end. Being estranged from ourselves, we become perfect victims for the person or thing unto which we have projected our power, which has taken possession of us, because responsibility and control no longer rest with us. If that person is a servant of his irrational passion (his idolatry), the result for those who comply with him can only be bad.

It is the responsibility of the leaders of the institution to recognize and weed out such self-estranged persons from our midst. They must be completely neglected. That is the instruction of our Founder-Acarya in *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, *Mad.* 2.218 purport:

A mundane person in the dress of a Vaisnava should not be respected but rejected. This is enjoined in the *sastras* (*upeksa*). The word *upeksa* means neglect. One should neglect an envious person. A preacher's duty is to love the Supreme Personality of Godhead, make friendships with Vaisnavas, show

mercy to the innocent and reject or neglect those who are envious or jealous. There are many jealous people in the dress of Vaisnavas in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and they should be completely neglected. There is no need to serve a jealous person who is in the dress of a Vaisnava. When Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava sevā nistara peche keba*, he is indicating an actual Vaisnava, not an envious or jealous person in the dress of a Vaisnava.

"A preacher's duty is to love the Supreme Personality of Godhead, make friendships with Vaisnavas, show mercy to the innocent and reject or neglect those who are envious or jealous." Here Prabhupāda describes the *madhyama-adhikārī* according to the Eleventh Canto of *Bhagavatam*. The preacher's duty is to discriminate on the basis of these four functions. Neglecting to do so does not vault us into the next class of devotee, *uttama-adhikārī*; rather we remain on the third-class platform, *kanistha*. The verse defining the intermediate devotee makes it plain that the instruction to neglect the envious and jealous should not be neglected. Following this instruction is as important as loving the Supreme Lord, making friends with devotees, and preaching to the innocent.

VII

We have a social rationalization in ISKCON that we to discriminate means we will commit Vaisnava *aparādha*. Thus when someone wants to disempower a person eager to discriminate, we try to instill in him or her fear of Vaisnava *aparādha*. The singular irony in this is that although discriminating is the function of our intelligence, this species of illogic discourages people from using their intelligence; but the whole basis of spiritual life is to use one's intelligence more and more. So much so, that the Lord promises to give us more intelligence when we need it. God did not give us the gift of intelligence so we can forego its use. Prabhupāda said, "Use your intelligence, and if you don't have any, ask somebody who has." He never said, "Don't use your intelligence, just ask somebody." If we don't practice *buddhi-yoga*, we must be doing *abuddhi-ayoga*. What would be the practical value of that? This important point about intelligence is made in the teaching of Lord Kapilamuni to Devahūti (SB.3.26.30):

Doubt, misapprehension, correct apprehension, memory and sleep, as determined by their different functions, are said to be the distinct characteristics of intelligence.

The purport opens:

Doubt is one of the important functions of intelligence; blind acceptance of something does not give evidence of intelligence. Therefore the word *samsāya* is very important; in order to cultivate intelligence, one should be doubtful in the beginning.

After we hear something that makes common sense or is consistent with the philosophy, we should let go our doubt. However, this proposal supposes that we at least took the time to know the philosophy ourselves.

Besides misusing *Vaisnava-aparādha* to discourage discriminating, another ploy by which we sidestep the responsibility to discriminate is by implying that owing to our advanced Vaisnava consciousness we are above that platform. We are aloof from seeing the dark side. This is the

other social rationalization, that "I am an *uttama-adhikari*, " or I want to be one so badly, that I will assume the posture of one who is above discriminating. The irony of this, however, is that it is highly doubtful that one attains the *uttama* stage without undergoing the rigors of the *madhyama* stage. One must be an undergraduate before entering the graduate level. Honorary degrees are possible, but they are not the general rule.

Another irony, is that even if one is *uttama*, Prabhupada taught that the *uttama* comes down to the *madhyama* level to preach. In that case we have to practice more and more rather than less and less what Prabhupada calls "the preacher's duty"--to distinguish or discriminate on the basis of these four points: 1. To love the Supreme Personality of Godhead; 2. Make friendships with Vaisnavas; 3. Show mercy to the innocent; 4. Reject or neglect those who are envious or jealous.

If we follow this instruction, we have to reject the rationalizations against discriminating. If we don't follow his instruction, we remain on the *kanistha* platform. The institution may promote a *kanistha* to any designation it wants, even *saktyavesa-avatara*, but that will not determine the true position of that devotee. Only his symptoms reveal his true position, and from the viewpoint of symptoms, a *kanistha* by any other name is still a *kanistha*.

VIII

The institution's first responsibility should be to preserve the integrity of both the philosophy and the dynamics of personalism so that sincere devotees get the optimum chance for an empowered experience of Krsna consciousness. Prabhupada wants us to completely neglect the irrationally driven or personally motivated "devotee," the envious and jealous mundane person. If we fail to do this important task, we may endorse the self-estranged as self-realized. Then the Krsna consciousness movement becomes, unwittingly, a swindle.

Such a predicament is a disgrace to Srila Prabhupada and our *acaryas*. They worked hard to preserve the teaching of Lord Caitanya intact and pass it to us. If we become lax about our responsibility to the *parampara*, we render a disservice to the mission of Lord Caitanya, for the only outcome of self-estrangement is irrationality in place of reason--in other words, a dysfunctional system.

When the individual is devalued, diminished, shrunken, in place of self-love, neighborly love, and love of God, our self-esteem becomes the object of our striving.

Pursuit of self-esteem is another form of being possessed by something outside ourselves, another kind of irrational passion, another idol. Like all other forms of alienation, it is a disguised form of self-contempt. The whole situation can lead to nothing but thinging, dehumanization, impersonalism. The fact that it is all enacted in God's name is no consolation to the victims of our dysfunctional dynamics.

Chapter Eight - The Prime Symptom of an Alienated Culture

The primary factor favoring alienation is the "big" organization. The bigger it is the more one feels like a face in a crowd, and remote from one's actions. One feels like a functionary, an uninspired bureaucrat, striving to be competent. Just as one may struggle to keep one's balance in the push and pull of a crowd, so in a big organization one feels need to struggle for survival, to keep one's place in the hierarchy--and to move up.

In a consumer society, the pressure to excel can be immense, for self-worth is measured by having things. One is driven to acquire more and more. In the struggle to compete one often rises above the level of his competence, whereupon his struggle becomes more fierce, like when a man loses his balance and windmills his arms in a desperate bid to avoid falling. Naturally, just as the windmilling arms create turbulence in the air, the fierce struggle to appear competent and to secure one's place in the bureaucracy causes havoc within the system.

Is this irrelevant to us in ISKCON? Ostensibly we have renounced the world and no longer participate in the rat race for acquisitions. We are not like the ordinary people. We are against acquisitiveness and having things for the sake of having them. We are against owning silly things as well. But we are not against having functional property that facilitates our service to the Lord.

But what about those of us who are driven to keep up with the latest and best models of cars, phones, computers, and rationalize it as functional property, necessary for our service, as *yukta-vairagya*? Or could it be that we have left behind the gross objects and found subtle substitutes to strive for, to "possess:" position in the institution, rich disciples, smart disciples, even ordinary disciples, enjoying the company of female disciples, being served, being praised, license to travel, to be unaccountable, gifts of money, rich food, fame, or other perks? In which case, we are as driven as the nondevotee to move up within the social and hierarchical system.

Of course, this is not very "spiritual." However, if we can somehow equate this getting ahead with spiritual advancement, can't we now rationalize our self-serving agenda as a virtue?

Look around you, reader. Can you see the symptoms of being a blind, driven company man among your friends, among the persons you revere, and perhaps worship? Are you afraid to take a lean hard look? Why? Have you been taught to see ISKCON with only a rosy glow and any other view is your problem? Have you disempowered yourself from forming your own conclusions? Have you been taught that to do this is Vaisnava *aparadha*? Is Srila Prabhupada, who said nothing should be accepted blindly, teaching this as well?

Have you been taught that you have no capacity to make any objective discernment because your intelligence is limited and besides you have four defects? Have they convinced you that your view is relative and the "authorities" view is absolute, so much so you are hopelessly incapable of putting one and one together and coming to the right conclusion? If so, did it occur to you, that having knowledge and becoming *sastra-caksusa* is rather inconsistent with the idea that you have no capacity to discriminate? When Krsna gave knowledge to Arjuna, he concluded by telling him to deliberate on this fully and then decide. Why can't you?

And don't forget to look inside yourself as well. Are you devoted to the *parampara* first and foremost or to the institution? Some believe the two are the same. What is your opinion? When I ask for your opinion, I don't mean that you repeat what someone else has told you. I mean that between the philosophy in Prabhupada's books and your own intelligence, what do you think?

Are you driven to be a company man or to something else that is tangential to bhakti? Because, dear reader, if you mix bhakti with personal ambition, you may or may not get your personal ambition fulfilled, *but you definitely will not get bhakti*. The same applies to any person who is estranged from himself in the name of being a company man. When you hear

Bhagavatam speakers telling you, "Just stay in Prabhupada's ISKCON and you will go back to Godhead," do you feel elated by the hype, or do you appreciate that the speaker has no idea about *bhakti*, that he is going full speed ahead with his headlights on dim and wants you to come aboard? Do you listen to the *content* of what is said and gauge that against the philosophy in Prabhupada's books or do you simply let *who* is speaking obscure what is being said?

People in mixed devotional service are all around you. Are you prepared to open your eyes and face the fact squarely? Or do you prefer to feel warm and secure, tacitly playing in the game of self-deception? If so, let me remind you of the bull Dharma's saying to Pariksit Maharaja, that "an accomplice is as guilty as the perpetrator."

II

Kindly ponder these questions in the background while we continue analyzing institutional bigness, how it fosters bureaucracy, which fosters alienation, which fosters authoritarian dynamics, which is impersonalism, which is opposed to Krsna consciousness. In *The Sane Society*, Fromm traced how the development of "big business" led to bigger and bigger bureaucratic structures, which led to the worker being alienated, first from himself, then from others.

Big business demands that the workers become so specialized they became mechanized persons. They sit exactly here, their arms or fingers move but this much, to perform the function for which they are paid. Their roles are repetitive and mindless. Even their work-related talk is limited to a specialized area of focus and concern. Every function is so streamlined the workers are stripped of the need to think or to move freely. Creativity, challenge, the responsibility to make choices and decisions are reduced with each step of progress. The result is a kind of psychic regression of the individual, unless he or she has the courage to break away from the herd. Few do. Inwardly, few have the courage to do anything so radical. Outwardly, they are locked in because they need the money to meet their monthly expenses. They are strapped to life's treadmill, moving, ever moving, but going nowhere.

Do we have our equivalent of this in ISKCON? Sadly, we do. With the emphasis we put on external achievements in the field of preaching, over and above personal growth in spiritual realization, we entice people to become more and more oriented to a mechanical approach to preaching and relationships, and indeed all spheres of life, because such an approach appears to maximize results. But it comes with a price: we devalue the person.

The entire lure of big business is massive increase in productivity; and that is our entire outlook on preaching Krsna consciousness; and we quote Prabhupada to create that "enthusiasm" as we shall see in one of the upcoming chapters; but we never quote him saying "Boil the milk" or "We want class not mass." That is not considered as vital; and those who want to follow those instructions of Prabhupada's are dubbed idle meditators or even more derogatory names.

We overlook the fact that undue stress on achievement leads to mechanization of the individual, which diminishes him, via increasing bureaucracy, which has a dual purpose: It strives to increase productivity and, because of all the hierarchical layers between the top and the bottom, psychologically pushes the top managers further and further up and away from the common devotee. This distance is equated by both the top and the bottom as spiritual realization. Our "kings" lose the common touch. This in turn increases the striving of the

individual devotees to get recognition and security in the infrastructure. The net result is more a power-driven scheme than a grace-driven one, a bureaucracy rather than a meritocracy, which is what *varnasrama* culture is. But no one acknowledges that. We pretend our power-driven system is grace-driven.

In the massive productivity scheme, the manager's role is also one of alienation. He becomes alienated because as a temple president or GBC, for example, he wants to compete with other temple presidents or zones. He has to, because being alienated, the institution now has primacy over his unfolding of his powers of reason and performing acts of love, over his becoming a finer human being. Keeping up with the prabhus is now the major inner motivation as ascendancy in the organization has primacy over his spiritual growth. Indeed, regardless of how pious the rhetoric used in the group, productivity and growth of the institution is more and more equated with spiritual advancement. Now self-worth is based on achieving for the institution rather than overcoming one's *anarthas*, one's irrational strivings. The spiritual progress of those under him is now secondary to the need of the temple to compete, which is the need of the institution. Hence the institution stands over and above the individual. The institution becomes all-powerful; it becomes the deity.

This is not an ill-motivated temple president or GBC man by any means. He has simply lost his focus and become lost to himself because of the system, which is prone to corruption by its very nature. Bureaucracy spontaneously leads to alienation. Our man is possessed by the institution and is simply and sincerely doing his best to cooperate for Srila Prabhupada. In running with the herd, however, he has never taken time out to figure out what cooperate means. If he does get a twinge of conscience, he soon forgets about it out of fear that he'll be rejected by the herd, which is ultimately the most powerful tool of coercion.

In this scenario those who can inspire productivity--that is, who are better at manipulation--gain prominence over those who are capable of spiritual inspiration, because the spiritually inspired are viewed in this *rajasic* scheme as useless armchair philosophers who don't contribute quantifiably to the gross productivity of the organization. Oddly, at these times no one recalls that Srila Prabhupada sometimes described *varnasrama* culture as lazy intelligent (*brahmanas*), active intelligent (*kshatriyas*), active foolish (*vaisyas*), and lazy foolish (*sudras*). That is too cerebral for those possessed by passionate (irrational) strivings, who can only measure worth in terms of "the bottom line." The result is that people are depersonalized even though we hear lectures daily about the glory of personalism.

We should not think this is impossible, that it can't happen to us, because we would catch it right away, that persons inclined to use ISKCON for their private agenda will surely be exposed. In several places Srila Prabhupada has warned us that it can happen and indeed we shall see in the chapter "Casualty Report" that Madhudvisa prabhu, a former GBC man, believes it has happened.

Corporate culture or big business is what ISKCON has functioned as up to now. Meanwhile, in his letters and books, Srila Prabhupada states that our mission is to model *varnasrama* culture, in which the *brahmanas* are responsible to create a sober, *sattvic* atmosphere in the social body by their enlightening preaching. In corporate culture, which we have by the admission of Harikesa Swami and others, the managers are at the top. This ensures a power-driven, productivity oriented, *rajasic* atmosphere in the organization. It is such an atmosphere that offers the favorable climate for alienation.

As explained thus far, the problem is complex. It gets considerably more so when, despite all indications to the contrary, the *rajasic* managers live in a paradigm that they are the *brahmanas* and are keeping the *sattvic* dynamic in place. And, what is the position of those who point out this lop-sided understanding? According to the 1996 chairman of the GBC they are the "victims of the mode of passion," and "casualties of war." Amazing.

III

As mentioned before, corporate culture inevitably leads to the most powerful tool of alienation: bureaucracy. Let's read it as Fromm puts it and we will see why Srila Prabhupada wrote "Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing is spoiled":

The problem of the manager opens up one of the most significant phenomena in an alienated culture, that of *bureaucratization*. Both big business and government administrations are conducted by a bureaucracy. Bureaucrats are specialists in the administration of things *and of men*. Due to the bigness of the apparatus to be administered, and the resulting abstractification, the bureaucrats' relationship to the people is one of complete alienation.

Anyone in ISKCON over fifteen years knows exactly what Fromm is talking about. They will have no doubt that we have the prime symptom of an alienated culture. So many devotees have told me that the leadership of ISKCON is out of touch, estranged, and impersonal, and we lack the mechanisms to give objective feedback so that the top stays in touch with the bottom. One can give feedback, if anointed by the leaders to do so, with the unspoken condition that it cannot be frank, straightforward, and honest. That is "offensive." Hard-headed realism is simply not playing the game. A close look at the GBC Chairman's message for the Summer '96 issue of the *GBC Journal* proves it. His short address is analyzed in the chapter, "A Diagnosis."

The fact that all over the world there are hundreds of devotees who want to follow the process, but will not live under the authority of the society's leaders, proves that the leaders are out of touch. But in the typical manner of the individual who is unaware that he is lost to himself, our leaders are convinced that they are completely in touch with the self of the group organism. They preach "Show your love for Srila Prabhupada by cooperating." But they cannot cooperate to make ISKCON attractive and livable to the broadest spectrum of devotees. Their whole concept of cooperating is that they tell you what to do and you do it. They won't even face the problem.

Especially heartrending is that the dynamics we use alienate intelligent men and exalt the fanatic. The blind "I'm-just- *completely*-crazy-about-my-gurudeva" type of simpleton, is valued over the cool-headed, potentially independently thoughtful type of person. Systematic, thoughtful, rational thinking, which Prabhupada advocated, is suspect: but if one yells and screams irrationally, petulantly, and doesn't fail to punctuate it at regular intervals with "Srila Prabhupada," then one is taken as a sold out "Prabhupada man." In Europe I asked a godbrother, "Maharaja, how do you know who is a sincere disciple?" Completely seriously, he replied, "If he runs after me." I can think of half-dozen ways to answer this question that is more in line with *sastra*, but if my conception of guru was some sort of Hollywood celebrity or a rock star, in short, a personality cult, I would agree with his answer.

As one former GBC said, while still a GBC, "ISKCON is not for intelligent people." I recall having a conversation with Rabindra Swarupa dasa several years ago in which he said, "Our movement is anti-intellectual." I responded, "Are you kidding, we are scared of intelligent people. We don't want them around." We spoke at length of the many ways we work *against*

intelligent persons staying in our society and *against* attracting them to join our movement. I remember that conversation, because it was at that time he first recommended me to read one of the best satirical essays of all time on organizational bungles, "Injelitis or Palsied Paralysis" by C. Northcote Parkinson, which appears in the book *Parkinson's Law*. Rabindra Swarupa and I were in agreement then, but now that he is a GBC, I wonder if he still agrees. If he doesn't, I would be curious to know, apart from the fact that now he too is a GBC, what is significantly different now than back in 1985?

As I am working on this chapter, a devotee came to visit me. He told me that in his country, over the course of seven years, he has observed that the student community is taking less and less interest in our movement. I've gotten similar reports from Australia, England, Canada, and the USA. In every case I was assured that the problem does not lie in our philosophy, but in our dynamics. Some devotees admit to a problem I have had for several years--that they cannot represent the society to the public with a clear conscience. A godsister said, "I quit book distribution because when I give books to people and then think that they would come to our temple, I just can't do that anymore."

This is a problem for us to address, but when our leaders get feedback that does not flatter them or confirm their expectations, they attack the messenger with vigor, which serves to silence others. In this oppressive atmosphere, they believe that the silence of the masses means all is well, the problem is solved. The messenger is also dead, which he deserves for his offenses. Good job. Well done. We are serving Prabhupada. Actually the silence stems from fear of reprisal. It is the atmosphere of totalitarianism.

A disciple went to his GBC-guru and submitted that he felt that the guru was more concerned with the needs of the institution than the well-being of his disciples. The guru mimed a slapping motion back and forth and said, "You are speculating," which sends a not too subtle message of intimidation, serving to silence expressing doubts, puts one on the defensive--but does not satisfy one's concern at all.

Typically, an outspoken dissenter comes under personal attack, while his concerns fester. The leaders won't recognize that it is out of love for Srila Prabhupada that we risk their ire and try to address unsavory dynamics, that loyal opposition is a valid role for keeping a healthy balance in a social system. When they do acknowledge the loyal opposition, they want to control the mechanism for dissent. This effectively disempowers all legitimate dissent. They say Prabhupada said we should follow the Englishman's adage "My ISKCON, right or wrong, I love thee." True, but where is the conflict between that saying and this one: ISKCON, when it is right to be kept right; and when it is wrong to be put right? Indeed, not to right our wrongs would be unloving. IV Fromm continues to describe the psychological state of the manager-bureaucrat and there is much for us to glean from it:

They, the people to be administered, are objects whom the bureaucrats consider neither with love nor with hate, but completely impersonally; the manager-bureaucrat must not feel, as far as his professional activity is concerned; he must manipulate people as though they were figures, or things.

This is precisely what the disciple was protesting to his guru near the end of the previous section. Not wanting to believe the cold indifference with which some of our bureaucrats regard us, we have rationalized their manipulating us like objects as symptomatic of their being above *raga* and *dvesa*. Their lack of feeling, their heartlessness, we rationalize as indicating persons transcendental to all mundane considerations. We think it a sign of their concern for the expansion of the mission of Lord Caitanya.

A GBC man, and a guru, in a very sober, unguarded moment, told a temple president and godbrother, "All day long all I do is manipulate people." In a similar moment of truth, another

GBC man, also a guru, told a godbrother, "Sometimes I do things that I know I should feel guilty about, but I don't. What do you think about that?" The godbrother's reply was quick and apt: "I think you should see a psychiatrist." Unfortunately, this good advice will probably not be followed. The same godbrother in question once told me, "I hate psychology." In light of his earlier statement, one can't fail to see why. No alienated person wants to self-examine; he may have to face reality. Only a crisis can bring a person back from orbit.

Of course, in the honeymoon stage of our ISKCON experience, when we are brimming with neophyte zeal, the average devotee tends not to see the impersonalism. Or we see it, doubt our perceptions, and explain it away as something else, because after reading Prabhupada's books we want to believe so badly in the organization he founded. This is natural. Always, in the romantic stage of a relationship, we see no flaws in the beloved. Later on, if we do start to see real problems, we have invested so much in the institution by that time, we don't want to see that we made a mistake. Therefore, some readers will recognize the validity of the subjects discussed in this book in light of their experience. Others, less experienced, will have to wait until they are ready to recognize the truth, perhaps when their experience confirms what is said here.

V

The bureaucrats become indispensable as the organizations grow. Without them everything would fall apart, or so it is feared. As alienation takes hold and one feels more and more powerless, more and more power is projected onto the hierarchy and the bureaucrats that occupy the various posts. In ISKCON, for example, the title "GBC" has come to be something considerably weightier than it was in Prabhupada's time. GBC's are regarded by most new devotees as certified *uttama adhikaris*, infallible and incorruptible. Many devotees believe that to look at the body with a discerning eye is blasphemy. Maybe they lack the qualifications to discriminate, but they also project their disqualification onto others, because without the rubberstamp of the institution the neophyte does not know who to consider faithful, enlightened, or dedicated to the mission of Lord Caitanya.

And the GBC aids in fostering this misguided notion. Once a GBC man wrote me that we have to consider the temple presidents' view because they have dedicated themselves to Prabhupada's service. The implied message was that I am not a temple president, hence not as dedicated to Prabhupada, so my views were not as valid. Not to diminish the dedication of the temple presidents, but he was expressing the alienated outlook: that those not in the hierarchy are less dedicated than those in it, which is philosophically incorrect. However, the mere hint that you have a separate opinion from a GBC man is enough to cause a huge question mark to appear in your halo.

Our chief bureaucrats have thus gained a godlike aspect. We become dependent on them, supplicant, and pliant. They dominate and distribute benefits (mercy) and we beg. Without them, so we believe, we'd have chaos, we'd perish. And they believe it too.

The upshot of the capitalistic bureaucratic system is that status becomes all, form becomes more than content. Hence the capitalist who has money can acquire a work of art as a symbol of status, when in fact he has no appreciation of art; or an excellent library though he has the most banal literary taste; or a collection of good music though he lacks the ability to appreciate music.

We have our equivalent of this bureaucratic glitch in our Krsna consciousness movement, wherein one acquires the status of advanced realizations without any concomitant effort, but purely as a result of moving up the hierarchical rungs, of tenure in the organization. The system certifies (rubberstamps) one's advancement. This rubberstamping is not in accord with our philosophical principles. Our *parampara* system endorses meritocracy not bureaucracy, which simultaneously alienates one from one's self and seduces one via the system, as few will have the courage to dissent from the herd and refuse its enticements. As proof, just look at what became of the last wave of reformers in our society.

Bureaucratic rubberstamping points to another way in which "the whole thing is spoiled." By rubberstamping gurus the transparency of the *parampara* is lost, because competence in being transparent via medium is not the central consideration. Indeed, the guru becomes a bureaucratic functionary himself, because keeping the partyline becomes more important than keeping the *parampara* line.

VI

Did Prabhupada intend us to have GBC-gurus that manipulate people all day? Did he want us not to feel guilty when we did things that weren't on the Vaisnava platform?

Prabhupada taught us that a saintly person is more considerate of others than he is of himself. Therefore, having to "manipulate" people as his service is abhorrent to true Vaisnava.

Prabhupada taught us that the Vaisnava's heart is like molten gold. Such a heart could not fail to feel guilt or embarrassment at improper action or treatment of others, feel pangs of conscience, and be driven to seek redress. There is no question of an advanced Vaisnava not feeling badly for acting otherwise.

Did Prabhupada intend us to succumb to the bureaucratization of ISKCON and the concomitant impersonal dynamic? Most of all, did he intend the *parampara* system to be defiled by the bureaucratic process of making people gurus by appointment, a process that is sure to get politicized? Definitely not. His opening sentence on the *satatam kirtayanto mam* verse reads: "The *mahatma* cannot be manufactured by rubber-stamping an ordinary man." In flagrant disregard of his teachings we have engaged in rubber-stamping. This is all proof of alienation on an individual and institutional scale.

Chapter Nine - Prabhupada's Answer to Alienation

Devotees need to know what Prabhupada's conception of structure, mood, and management was like. Then they can decide for themselves if what we are currently doing is in line with his spirit and intent, or a sham. As far as avoiding bureaucratization, Prabhupada's conception was that "Small is beautiful." He wanted each temple to be autonomous, keeping the power of decision making on a local level, with the temple presidents and those who work under him. In this way, there is considerably less chance of alienation for our leaders would not lose the common touch.

Here are just a few samplings of his directives on management. They show that if we were to follow his directions, and really show our love--not just by cooperating, but cooperating with his instructions--then the alienation that threatens to chase away intelligent people could not happen. The first letter is his most famous directive on management (to Karandhara, 1972):

Regarding your points about taxation, corporate status, etc., I have heard from Jayatirtha you want to make big plan for centralization of management, taxes, monies, corporate status, bookkeeping, credit, like that. I do not at all approve of such plan. Do not centralize anything. Each temple must remain independent and self-sufficient. That was my plan from the very beginning, why you are thinking otherwise? Once before you wanted to do something centralizing with your GBC meeting, and if I did not interfere the whole thing would have been killed.

Do not think in this way of big corporation, big credits, centralization--these are all nonsense proposals. Only thing I wanted was that books printing and

distribution should be centralized, therefore I appointed you and Bali Mardan to do it. Otherwise, management, everything, should be done locally by local men. Accounts must be kept, things must be in order and lawfully done, but that should be each temple's concern, not yours.

Krishna Consciousness Movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action, not for making bureaucracy. Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing will be spoiled. There must be always individual striving and work and responsibility, competitive spirit, not that one shall dominate and distribute benefits to the others and they do nothing but beg from you and you provide. No.

Never mind there may be botheration to register each centre, take tax certificate each, become separate corporations in each state. That will train men how to do these things, and they shall develop reliability and responsibility, that is the point. I am little observing now, especially in your country, that our men are losing their enthusiasm for spreading on our programmes of Krishna Consciousness movement. Otherwise, why so many letters of problems are coming, dissatisfied? That is not a very good sign.

The whole problem is they are not following the regulative principles, that I can detect. Without this, enthusiasm will be lacking. Even mechanically following, and if he gets gradually understanding from the class, he will come to the point of spontaneous enthusiasm. This spontaneous loving devotional service is not so easy matter, but if one simply sticks strictly to the rules and regulations, like rising early, chanting 16 rounds, chanting gayatri, keeping always clean--then his enthusiasm will grow more and more, and if there is also patience and determination, one day he will come to the platform of spontaneous devotion, then his life will be perfect. All of this I have told you in Nectar of Devotion. So I do not think the leaders are themselves following, nor they are seeing the others are following strictly. That must be rectified at once.

Each centre remain independent, that's all right, but the president and other officers must themselves follow and see the others are following the regulative principles carefully, and giving them good instruction so they may understand nicely why this tapasya is necessary. And GBC and Sannyasis will travel and see the officers are doing this, and if they observe anything lowering of the standard, they must reform and advise, or if there is some discrepancy I shall remove it.

Of course, if new men are coming, they may not be expected immediately to take to our regulative principles cent per cent. Therefore we should not be so anxious to induce them to live in the temple. Anyone who lives in the temple must agree to follow the rules and regulations without fail. So if some new man moves in with us he may become discouraged if he is forced in this way. Therefore let them live outside and become gradually convinced in the class why they should accept some austerity, then they will live with us out of their own accord and follow nicely everything. It is very difficult to give up very quickly so many bad habits as you have got in your country, so educate them gradually, first with chanting, and do not be so much anxious to count up so

many numbers of new devotees, if such devotees go away later being too early forced.

I want to see a few sincere devotees, not many false devotees or pretenders.

So my point is that the regulative principles must be followed by everyone. Otherwise their enthusiasm dwindles and they again think of sex and become restless, and so many problems are there. There is some symptom of missing the point. The point is to be engaged in doing something for Krishna, never mind what is that job, but being so engaged in doing something very much satisfying to the devotee that he remains always enthusiastic. He will automatically follow the regulative principles because they are part of his occupational duty--by applying them practically as his occupational duty, he realises the happy result of regulative principles.

So the future of this Krishna Consciousness movement is very bright, so long the managers remain vigilant that 16 rounds are being chanted by everyone without fail, that they are all rising before four morning, attending mangal arati--our leaders shall be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service, which is individual and spontaneous and voluntary. They should try always to generate some atmosphere of fresh challenge to the devotees, so that they will agree enthusiastically to rise and meet it.

That is the art of management: to draw out spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Krishna. But where are so many expert managers? All of us should become expert managers and preachers. We should not be very much after comforts and become complacent or self-contented. There must be always some tapasya, strictly observing the regulative principles--Krishna Consciousness movement must be always a challenge, a great achievement to be gained by voluntary desire to do it, and that will keep it healthy. So you big managers now try to train up more and more some competent preachers and managers like yourselves. Forget this centralizing and bureaucracy.

Letter to Tamal Krsna, 1969:

Therefore the management should be done very cautiously so that everyone is satisfied in their autonomous managing capacity. . . . You should always deal things so tactfully that people may not fall away. Every living being is important in Krishna Conscious service, and we must take all precautions that one may not fall away. . . . Regarding movement of the members from one temple to another, I think the local president's permission is sufficient. Don't take too much load of individual administration. That will be unmanageable in the near future. . . . I thank you so much for the new temples that are opening. Please conduct them nicely and enthuse the people to stick to the chanting of Hare Krishna Mantra and following the rules and regulations. Then they will be strong enough to manage things very nicely. Other things will be supplied by Krishna.

Letter from Prabhupada's secretary "To all Temple Presidents" and approved by Prabhupada. 1972:

The formula for ISKCON organization is very simple and can be understood by everyone. The world is divided into twelve zones. For each zone there is one zonal secretary appointed by Srila Prabhupada. The zonal secretaries duty is to see that the spiritual principles are being upheld very nicely in all the Temples of his zone. Otherwise each Temple shall be independent and self-supporting. Let every Temple President work according to his own capacity to improve the Krishna Consciousness of his center. So far the practical management is concerned, that is required, but not that we should become too much absorbed in fancy organization. Our business is spiritual life, so whatever organization needs to be done, the Presidents may handle and take advice and assistance from their GBC representative. In this way let the Societies work go on and everyone increase their service at their own creative rate.

Letter to Satsvarupa, 1972:

You will not be too much involved with local temple management, but for management which will require the larger interests, that will be your responsibility as GBC. . . .

You mention you like to speak now very often, but the first business should be to preach to the devotees. It is better to maintain a devotee than to try to convince others to become devotees. It is the duty of the GBC to maintain the devotees, keep them in the highest standard of Krishna Consciousness, and give them all good instruction, and let them go out and preach for making more devotees.

Your first job should be to make sure that every one of the devotees in your zone of management is reading regularly our literatures and discussing the subject matter seriously from different angles of seeing, and that they are somehow or other absorbing the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness philosophy.

If they are fully educated in our philosophy and if they can get all of the knowledge and study it from every viewpoint, then very easily they will perform tapasya or renunciation and that will be their advancement in Krishna Consciousness. So first thing is to instruct all of your temple presidents and the other devotees to read daily, just as we have done in our morning class in Los Angeles. You may remember that we were reading one sloka each morning in Sanskrit and reciting it altogether and then discussing it thoroughly by seeing different new things. So you introduce this system and train the devotees first.

Don't be too much concerned for the time being with nondevotees, now we must fix-up what devotees we have got in the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness, then we will succeed. What good are many, many devotees if none of them are knowledgeable?

Letter to Gurukripa, 1976:

I have spoken with Sukadeva das Adhikari, the Honolulu Temple President. It appears that because you had made some derogatory racial remarks against him in the presence of other devotees here in the temple, it has become difficult to manage and win the respect of this devotees. If the GBC undermines the efforts of the temple presidents how will things go on smoothly. This situation could have been avoided by sober dealings in a Krsna Conscious manner.

I do not want that Sukadeva be removed from his position as I can see that he is sincerely following the principles at present. The GBC can not whimsically change the temple president, there is a resolution to this effect. Why have you threatened to remove him and unnecessarily created this situation? Please be very sober in your dealings with these temple presidents, they are undoubtedly rendering a valuable service and are worthy of respect and encouragement.

Letter to Madhudvisa, 1972:

I have received your letter from Sydney dated May 30, 1972, wherein you have expressed some hesitation to become the GBC Secretary for the Pacific zone. Actually you may be misunderstanding the present position or policy of this GBC. I have instructed all of the GBC men to give up their staying in one place and to remain always constantly traveling throughout their zones from temple to temple. . . . So being Sannyasi is no hindrance for being also GBC. In fact, the duties of the GBC men are now to be just like the duties of the Sannyasis.

I want that the GBC men should leave the management of the individual centers to the local presidents and concentrate themselves upon preaching work. They should be constantly traveling from one center to another center to see how the students are learning and to give whatever advice is necessary for improving the temple standards. In addition, the GBC men will open new centers, distribute literature, and they should always be traveling with a sankirtana party to accompany them. So practically there is no difference between the Sannyasi duty and the GBC duty. . . now you give all of the temple presidents your expert instructions and train them to become very responsible for saving the whole mankind from gliding gradually down to hell.

Letter to Rupanuga, 1974:

N.B. Regarding replacing Abhirama and Damodara I refer to the "Direction of Management" as follows: "Removal of a Temple President by GBC requires support by the local Temple members." Therefore you should take a vote of the Temple members and do the needful. A. C. B.S.

Letter to Damodara, 1973:

I am so glad to understand from you your concern about the managing of our Krsna Consciousness movement. Yes, you are my elder disciple, you are one of the leaders of our Society; therefore, it is your duty to feel always this responsibility for seeing that the things go on properly. So I am very glad to hear that you are taking so many steps for improving things and spreading Krsna Consciousness more and more to the citizens at large. Main thing is to somehow or other create first quality preachers on Krsna's behalf.

Regarding the several smaller temples being dependent upon the central temple of Washington D.C., that is up to you to decide, but so far I am concerned, I have not got much stock in such centralized management or organization. I never wanted that any of my temples shall be dependent upon the other temples. Rather, our main business is to train up men to be self sufficient and competent in many ways to carry on the preaching work, not to make them into specialists or to minimize their responsibility by centralizing everything. If each center must rely upon its own strength to stand, that will be better training ground for the devotees. We must learn how to do all kinds of varieties of engagements on Krsna's service, not that we shall expect anyone else to act for us and thus avoid something ourselves. . . in the case of new temples, it is better if they must have to struggle a little while to establish themselves in their cities, become familiar with the local city officials and leading citizens, elicit support from all quarters of the city, like that, otherwise these things will be neglected and there will be false dependency upon the outside supplies. This will deteriorate everything. Our purpose of Krsna consciousness movement is to create first class servants of Krsna, that means they know how to do everything.

There are so many valuable points to be gleaned from these and other occasions when Prabhupada spoke on management. In terms of our focus in this chapter, it is clear that he did not favor "ksatriya style" management from his GBC men; their role is clearly brahminical. But where is such function going on after thirty years?

II

In Prabhupada's vision temple presidents have considerably more power and responsibility than in ISKCON today. He wanted the GBC's to oversee management, to travel and preach, and to see that the devotees met our *spiritual* standards, thus diminishing the chances of bureaucratic pitfalls such as alienation and narrow focus on specialization. Narrow specialization favors loss of conscience, loss of self, and leads to conscious or unconscious misdoings of the group or sub-group.

Our present situation, is that the GBC wants to monopolize both the intellectual and the administrative roles. Subsequently it has vested interest in not changing to *varnasrama* culture--because if the change was made the GBC would have to decide to be either *brahmana* or *ksatriya*. Right now they favor doing both roles. Many are so absorbed in hands on management they hardly read Prabhupada's books and discuss them "from different angles of seeing." Yet they dictate philosophical understanding to those who do, not on the strength of their realization, but on the strength of their institutional position--administrative power equals philosophical realization. This is unheard of in Vedic culture. Many read for a few minutes just prior to giving class. As far as the quality of the classes, we refrain from commenting at this time.

Corporate culture means managers at the top, not the intellectuals, and that's the way we like it. This means a fundamentally *rajasicsociety*, with bureaucracy and the resultant alienation.

Also, I've heard the complaints so much that the GBC officers are spread too thin, which leads to stress, either high or low level. This is one of the major factors in causing dysfunctionality. Stress is another cause of alienation from one's self.

Considering our lineage from Rupa-Sanatana and all the energy Prabhupada expended to write his books so we will not go off the rails, our situation is nothing short of pathetic. Denial will not get us out. Facing our predicament is the only way.

III

While writing this book, the news arrived that a social convention in Europe has brought about the resolution that the GBC role is a brahminical one. Terrific news after so many years.

However, the scheme now is to add a bureaucratic layer to the GBC by creating GBC Deputies. This could be a good thing or a bad thing. If the deputies are simply yes men, it's a bad thing, another bureaucratic layer to foster attachment to position and alienation; and allowing the GBC's to become more inaccessible, but remain at the helm by remote control.

Why can't we simply study and follow Prabhupada's instructions?

Still, if the deputies get to exercise mature leadership according to their capacities, as an extension of the brahminical and not *ksatriya* function of the GBC officer, then this could be a truly vital development. The deputies could be a real asset to the GBC officer. If the deputies figuratively castrate the temple presidents all over again, then it is a pointless proposal, leading to more bureaucracy. From the above excerpts of Prabhupada's letters, it is clear that it was never his vision to have a leaders and sheep scheme. It spoils "the whole thing."

Chapter Ten - A Diagnosis or Dysfunctional Philosophizing

(WARNING: In this and the next five chapters, I apply the scalpel of candor.

The purpose is to see if alienation has infected our society on the leadership level. If so, then it is safe to assume that the infection reaches down through the ranks. However, surgery is not a calling for those who are squeamish at the sight of blood. Hence if you cannot stomach blood you are advised to skip to the final chapter.)

As mentioned in the introduction, the GBC denied my assertion that we practice authoritarian dynamics to an excessive degree. Implicit in that response was denial of the point in the following extract from Chapter Six of *Our Mission* Volume One, under the sub-heading "Consolidation of Power":

History and sociology have proven that most organizations--social, political, as well as religious--are usually formed with high ideals in mind. Sooner or later, however, as the organization becomes established, the original intent of the founder is forgotten. "Forgotten" does not mean an official change of aims or objectives. It means that the internal dynamics of the institution may change to the extent that it is no longer focused on the original goal, but on the institution perpetuating itself. Rather than the founder's mission, the real mission becomes keeping power and the bureaucratic structure intact.

This is a summary description of institutional self-estrangement. The mechanisms whereby this consolidation of power is achieved are disguised. The words of the founder and all the standard rhetoric is employed by the leaders to elicit the commitment and cooperation of the

members, but the fundamental or primary purpose for which the institution was formed--in ISKCON's case, to attend to the spiritual needs of the individual members--is assumed and in fact the secondary goals become primary.

In other words, the orientation of the institution undergoes a change. Service to the individual is put to one side, by assuming it is automatically taken care of, and service to the institution becomes the main objective. These two orientations appear identical, but careful analysis reveals that to be untrue. In the service-to-the-individual orientation, leaders see service to the members already fully participating in the institution as the primary focus of their powers and energies. In ISKCON's case we've seen in the letters from Srila Prabhupada cited in the previous chapter that he held this view. His 1972 letter to Satsvarupa Gosvami is especially clear in this regard.

The individual in Prabhupada's eyes is not a thing, chattel, but a person of value. The whole institution exists for the members' advancement in Krsna consciousness and they naturally respond to this by wanting to see the secondary goals, the institutional goals, achieved. This is the natural psychology of any member whose heart the institution has won.

In the service-to-the-institution orientation, service to the institution is everything. The individual is valued only in terms of his or her productivity in fulfilling those goals. Under this view, the leaders are apt to see the individuals as expendable and manipulation is used over motivation. The rhetoric is cloaked in glory: "because we have big things to accomplish;" and of course it is all "for Srila Prabhupada;" or "for Lord Caitanya;" or "we have to take risks to be recognized by Krsna."

Under this scheme the leaders completely lose sight of their real service. They don't see their role as winning hearts. They see themselves as having a monopoly on salvation and that the members must get their mercy or be lost. The prevalence of less intelligent members who play right into this assumption give weight and conviction to the leaders' wrongful notion. This is clearly evident in the following analysis and in the ensuing chapters, but none so clear as the discussion in the chapter called "What can he comment? These are facts."

Our diagnosis to ascertain if our society is a fully alienated organization begins with an analysis of two items that appeared in the *Summer '96* edition of the *GBC Journal* that came out right on the heels of volume one of *Our Mission*. The second analysis is in the next chapter.

The reader is reminded that throughout this book, we are not concerned with the particular individuals who penned these messages. We are concerned with the significance of how their words or actions serve as evidence of the pitfalls of bureaucracy as delineated in the chapters on alienation. The basic good intention of the writers is not in question. Yet we remind the reader that the most insidious form of swindle is that paved by good intentions.

Be reminded that in diagnosing the group organism, we must be aware of the tendency to blame or to see the act of diagnosing as the laying of blame. But the true purpose is not to focus on the "sinner" but on the "sin". Therefore the persons whose activities come under scrutiny for the purpose of diagnosis may remain faceless and nameless, but being prominent in the society it will no doubt be possible to figure out who some of these persons are.

Unfortunately, exposing questionable conduct of our "authorities" is commonly taken as a bad thing. Analytical thinking shows, however, that it is a good thing. If I know that there are people capable of seeing through my antics and they are not afraid to call a spade a spade, that will cause me to be more circumspect before I speak or act irrationally, unless I'm already too corrupt to care.

Also, I want to show the reader by example how we must apply Prabhupada's instruction that nothing must be accepted blindly but with care and with caution in all spheres of our experience, by processing data through the philosophy, for the candle of enlightenment lights all directions. We find in the "Chairman's Message," under the title "Transcendental Enthusiasm," an indirect denial of my claim of bad dynamics in our society, in the form of a

thinly veiled *ad hominem* attack on "critics of the GBC," using the philosophy, rather than countering specific criticisms with facts. The validity of the criticism is not addressed. The reader is coerced to take the side of the GBC by the author's mere assumption that criticism of the GBC is wrong or ill-intended. In the authoritarian system, bear in mind, sin is not offense against God. Sin is offense against powerful authorities, who have the capacity to make one's life miserable; and an offense is whatever they deem an offense no matter how unreasonable the claim may be.

He begins by quoting from an *Upadesamrta* purport:

Endeavor executed with intelligence in Krishna consciousness is called *utsaha*, or enthusiasm. The devotees find the correct means by which everything can be utilized in the service of the Lord (*nirbandhah krsna-sambandhe yuktam vairagyam ucyate*) . The execution of devotional service is not a matter of idle meditation but practical action in the foreground of spiritual life.

The Chairman then writes:

I believe this statement is the barometer of our movement's bodily and mental health. The word 'endeavor' pertains to efforts of the body. Endeavor in ISKCONian terms, is the united effort of the collective body of devotees. Intelligence directs endeavor to a practical end. The practical end Srila Prabhupada wants achieved is *yukta-vairagya*, the demonstration of the relevance of everything to Krishna's service.

"I believe this statement is the barometer of our movement's bodily and mental health." This is the first of several unsound statements in the course of an essay that runs less than a page and a half. The barometer of our movement's bodily and mental health is not ascertained by a purport in Prabhupada's books. That is the impersonal or alienated approach, like a doctor telling me the condition of my body, not by a physical exam, but by reading from a health manual. A doctor who practiced medicine like this is out of touch with his patient. In short, an awful doctor. Is the Chairman here confirming what scores of devotees already believe, that the GBC is out of touch?

ISKCON is made up of people. For the leaders, the barometer of ISKCON's bodily and mental health is ascertained by the honest feedback they get from the devotees, especially the older more experienced devotees. If our devotees are happy, ebullient, and engaged according to their natures, they will be enthusiastic naturally. Soaring with one's strengths is the whole psychological basis of *varnasrama* culture. That form of enthusiasm, tempered by intelligence, is built-in to the very science of Krsna consciousness. If this is being practiced in an honest way, then we can say the movement is healthy.

In *Our Mission Part I*, I quoted from the book *To Lead is to Serve*, wherein the author writes, "One way to judge our effectiveness as a leader is the amount of honest feedback that we get." In this connection, Machiavelli, whom one expects to favor the authoritarian scheme, has some relevant words:

There is no other way of guarding one's self against flattery than by letting men understand that they will not offend you by speaking the truth.

How we handle such truth is another indication of our effectiveness as leaders. In the story of the emperor's new clothes for example, how the emperor reacts after the small boy pointed out that he was naked, reveals the integrity or character of the emperor. If his instant maneuver is to punish the boy rather than face the truth, that reveals one facet of his delusion. If he responds by facing the truth with concern and understanding--in other words, if he responds rationally--then that would be an entirely different indication of his caliber.

Similarly, a rational approach to measuring the health of ISKCON, would be "Endeavor executed with intelligence in Krishna consciousness". Such intelligent endeavor on the part of our leaders would accord with Prabhupada's definition of enthusiasm. Instead, however, when a disciple of Prabhupada gives feedback, that is sidestepped, the person is persecuted, and we get an essay to hype us into enthusiasm, because that is easier, much easier, than to attend to the problem at its root.

This would be bad enough, except that in the process, we get a contorted explanation of Prabhupada's words and intentions, which will be apparent as this analysis continues. We can quote purports and statements of Prabhupada to support virtually any point of view we want, but when we ask warm-blooded "ordinary" devotees, then we really find out what life is like in the trenches. Failure to contact those people and yet attempt to tell them what is their condition is indicative of the impersonal dynamics that is a form of institutional rot. It turns people into things. It reeks of alienation.

Compare that to Lord Rama's going out in disguise to hear what the citizenry thought about life in His kingdom. One can't get more honest feedback than that approach. Our very capacity to serve Srila Prabhupada as leaders depends on our ability to face and process honest feedback. To get such honest feedback, however, the first requirement is that there must be an atmosphere of *no fear of reprisal*.

Further, the undiscerning devotee understands from this passage that we should be physically active, because mental or intellectual endeavor is construed as "idle meditation" by this author, despite Prabhupada's saying "with intelligence," which is hardly a bodily endeavor. The author forgets that the fundamental purpose of our mission is to create *brahmanas*, to whom intelligent endeavor is their natural bent and their main contribution to society. Prabhupada's use of "idle meditation" cannot refer to the very thing he worked so hard to create--a society for the intellectual class.

With a bad opening premise the Chairman's Message waddles along its erroneous path. He writes:

Enthusiasm (*utsaha*) is the combination of endeavor and intelligence. If there is enthusiasm, there will surely be spiritual health. Our social body may be physically strong, but if it lacks intelligent direction, that body's endeavor can hardly be called healthy. On the other hand, we may be scholarly and insightful, but if there is no endeavor, that is just as unhealthy, for it amounts to indolence.

"On the other hand, we may be scholarly and insightful, but if there is no endeavor, that is just as unhealthy, for it amounts to indolence." This is a truly meaningless statement parading as wisdom. What precisely is meant by "but if there is no endeavor"? That he does not say. He has created a strawman opponent. Being scholarly and insightful is only the result of endeavor.

He compares the social body to the physical body, which must have "intelligent direction," which makes good sense, but then he criticizes the scholarly and insightful, which does not. The social body is made up of diverse individuals and some may endeavor in one way, perhaps physically, others in another way, perhaps mentally. Therefore the social body has

four basic departments: *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, *vaisyas*, and *sudras*, each with its unique lines of endeavor.

If a person is scholarly and insightful, how does that amount to indolence? Then how come this author is *endeavoring* to share his scholarship and insight with us? If one is not scholarly and insightful in a way that serves my interest, should I conclude that he is indolent?

Scholarship is an endeavor, which is the responsibility of those who are brahmanical by nature. How can we create an intellectual class of men and be anti-scholarship? Ironically, the same author has published a book on philosophy, but *his* scholarship and insights are not evidence of indolence. According to our philosophy the genuinely scholarly and insightful are the heads of the social body. Here this author has given credence to my claim in *Our Mission* that our society is anti-intellectual.

But alas, because we have *rajasic* corporate culture instead of *varnasrama* culture, we denigrate the scholarly and insightful, the men of words, in preference to the men of action. It points to a lack of understanding of the philosophy and ultimately a lack of faith in Krsna's blueprint for social stability. Any society in which the brahminical role is not revered is doomed.

The *brahmanas* duty is to be scholarly and insightful. Those who are intelligent and faithful to Krsna's system seek to hear and consider the insights of such persons. When such persons deliberate on some aspect of the philosophy or some area of social concern, how is that indolence? Srila Prabhupada said of the brahminical function:

Keep everyone employed as *brahmana*, as *ksatriya*, as *vaisya*. Nobody should sit down. *Brahmanas*, they are writers, editors, lecturers, instructors, worshiping the Deity, ideal character. They have no anxiety for food, for clothing. Others should supply them. They haven't got to work.

And in Cc. Adi.13.82 purport we find this:

A *brahmana* does not become anyone's servant. To render service to someone else is the business of the *sudras*. A *brahmana* is always independent because he is a teacher, spiritual master and advisor to society. The members of society provide him with all the necessities for life. In *Bhagavad-gita* the Lord has divided society into four divisions-- *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya* and *sudra*. A society cannot run smoothly without this scientific division. A should give good advice to all the members of the society, a *ksatriya* should look after the administration, law and order of the society, *vaisyas* should produce and trade in all the needs of the society, whereas *sudras* should render service to the higher sections of society (the *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas* and *vaisyas*).

He says, "A society cannot run smoothly without this scientific division." That explains the whole predicament that makes the writing of *The Varieties of Dysfunctional Experience* necessary.

A *brahmana* is a servant of no one, but in the current ISKCON dynamic, a *brahmana* is one who is a mouthpiece for the leaders; whereas one who stands on principle, who puts philosophy before political correctness, is a troublemaker, not a *brahmana*. And a *brahmana* who thinks for himself is an idle meditator; and since might is right, under this dynamic, there is no scope for discussion. We should consider this bit of enduring wisdom--any system that does not tolerate wavemaking, only mediocrities rise to the top.

Another point with respect to the Chairman's Message is that enthusiasm is not necessarily the combination of endeavor and intelligence. That is only when it is in *sattvaguna*. Enthusiasm minus intelligent direction is *rajoguna*. But this author ranks all who would be scholarly and insightful, (i.e. *sattvic*) as "idle meditators" and by misquoting Srila Prabhupada, tries to bend the reader to the same conclusion. Being scholarly and insightful is itself an endeavor, but that is considered by him to be indolence, unhealthy. Healthy means the mode of passion.

The Vedic system is that *brahmanas* are scholarly and insightful and the administrators consult them. In this way the head and arms of the social body cooperate for the well-being of the whole body. *Brahmanas* are not, therefore, required to endeavor in the bodily, actively intelligent sense, as this author holds. Unless one is to assume that he and the body he represents are the sole *brahmanas*. They think for all others and intelligent direction only emanates from them. In other words, by virtue of their title, they have a monopoly on spiritual knowledge, understanding, and so forth. That view, however, is a commodity no one who understands Srila Prabhupada's books or knows ISKCON's history will buy.

This and the earlier cited passage, if read closely, hardly make sense. Unfortunately few devotees read carefully enough to ascertain when a little substance is casting a long shadow. For many, the mere stature of the author is enough for them read with no attempt to filter substance from shadow.

His message continues:

I suppose it's inevitable that at this point some readers are thinking (and not necessarily uncharitably so), "Here we go again, yet another pep talk from the GBC. 'Be enthusiastic, and everything will be OK.' We've heard that before and it is superficial."

This is a charming attempt to disarm the discerning reader. By saying, "See, I could anticipate your reaction and laugh at myself a little" he tries to lull the reader into thinking that this time it's no pep talk, for who will have the nerve to make fun of pep talk mode and then follow through with a pep talk?

By the end of this message, however, that is all it turns out to be, a pep talk: "Be enthusiastic, follow us, don't think, lest you transform overnight into an idle meditator." All the quoting of Prabhupada and the definition of enthusiasm etc., is simply to bring us to the conclusion that if we are enthusiastic to fulfill the institution's goals we satisfy this author. I may be enthusiastic not to follow him or the GBC blindly; enthusiastic to study, to reflect, to offer feedback; enthusiastic to hear and chant; I may be genuinely concerned about the direction of our society and the kind of atmosphere it maintains, and its lack of appeal to the intelligent; enthusiastic to fulfill any number of things Prabhupada wanted to achieve--but none of these enthusiasms count-- they are all "idle meditator" mode..

Some insight into the distinction between manipulation and motivation will be useful here. Motivation is the art of inspiring another to achieve a goal that we both have agreed is in our best interest. Manipulation is when I get someone to work for a goal that is in my best interest, but not in the other person's. People generally have a sixth sense for when they are being manipulated, but even that sense can be fooled when we are deceived with rhetoric--quoting Prabhupada and expressing what appears to be sound philosophy--with the assumption that ISKCON's goals automatically serve our goals, such as is practiced in the message under discussion. Another word for manipulation is hype.

The author follows with a display of his scholarly insight:

Kindly bear with me. I recently discussed the meanings of the word "enthusiasm" with HH Bhakti Caru Maharaja. It turns out that they share a

spiritual significance that is very instructive. One rendering of *utsaha* conjoins two words, "transcendental" (*ut*) and "together with" (*saha*), indicating the transcendental association of the Lord. Similarly, enthusiasm, which comes from Greek, conjoins "en" (in) and "theos" (God), indicating divine inspiration from inside the heart. By hearing *Bhagavad-gita*, Arjuna became enthusiastic to fight due to the constant association, by remembrance within, of Lord Krishna (*tasmat sarvesu kalesu mam anusmara yudhya ca*). In his enthusiasm, Arjuna performed great endeavors guided by unerring intelligence--by Krishna's grace.

I hope a deeper appreciation of the meanings of these words will help us get beyond hype and cynicism.

I'm no Sanskrit scholar, neither is the author, but since this is his attempt to cut the profile of an insightful and scholarly type (non-indolent), readers deserve to know the facts brought to my attention by a Sanskrit student of Satyanarayana prabhu. In response to the above passage, the student wrote: "The word *utsaha* is not derived from the word *saha* (with), which is an indeclinable preposition. *Utsaha* comes from the verb *sahmarsane*, which means to tolerate, to endure. When combined with *ut* the meaning is modified. The structure is *ut* (prefix), *sah* (verb), and *ghan* (suffix) thus forming a declinable abstract noun. There are no rules for compounds with the indeclinable *saha* as the last part of a word."

Thus the author's enthusiastic explanation of the word *utsaha* as "indicating the transcendental association of the Lord" is a figment, not of his imagination, but of the "authority" whom he cites and gives no basis for that person being accepted as an authority. This sort of intellectual sleight of hand goes on in our brahminical society constantly.

Let's leave aside enervated scholarship, and consider the author's main thrust: That his message is neither one of hype or cynicism but of enthusiasm. Then some questions come to mind. What is the undefined hype and cynicism he has in mind? How does the "deeper appreciation" get us "beyond hype and cynicism"? What lies beyond hype and cynicism? How does all this boil down in the context of his "message"?

If we understand as his probable intent that hype is unrealistic or excessive optimism and cynicism is unrealistic or excessive negativity, what constitutes the mid-point between these two extremes? Is it enthusiasm? In the context of his "message" one concludes it must be, yet it does not fit anywhere between the two extremes of hype and cynicism.

A mid-point between hype and cynicism is realism. Enthusiasm based on a realistic considerations of all factors is "enthusiasm guided by intelligence," which is sattvic and which is distinct from misguided (irrational or *rajasic*) enthusiasm. The Chairman's Message fails to make these distinctions.

If we reason like this, for example: Human life--whether oriented towards Krsna consciousness or materialism--is fraught with problems; thus cooperation for problem-solving is a rational basis for being enthusiastic. It is healthy, sane, and practical. As his overall message shows that the author is intelligent enough to know this, yet his message does not come across explicitly as one of problem-solving--indeed it is a thinly veiled criticism of those who advocate a problem-solving outlook, which is the natural result of neither hype nor cynicism but of realism. Thus one is forced to conclude that this Chairman, and by implication, the body he speaks for, is anti-realism, for he wants us to be enthusiastic on the basis of something other than realism. Hype would have to be the reason.

Here we can go still further: If the Chairman is unrealistic, which is another way of saying "in illusion;" and all who supported his message are in the same straits.

Let's continue stepping our way through his rhetoric:

This brings us to a further consideration of enthusiasm: it is distinguished from mere *rajo-guna* by the test of the Lord Himself. Arjuna passed victoriously through the great test of the Kurukshetra war, while other powerful warriors, impelled only by *ksatriya* passion, perished. In ISKCON one can purchase enthusiasm, the healing balm of spiritual ills, for the same price Arjuna paid: taking a risk for Krishna. "So we, our business is to become a little recognized by Krishna. So we shall go on preaching like this at all risk. Thank you very much." (Lec. Amedhabad, Dec. 1972)

Here is another infusion of bad reasoning passing as wisdom. Enthusiasm is distinguished from mere *rajoguna* in Arjuna's case, because he was fulfilling the will of the Lord. Simply rubberstamping our activities as the Lord's will by institutional fiat does not make them equal to Arjuna's. One who runs around blindly but enthusiastically doing the bidding of ISKCON does not automatically pass the test of the Lord. Prabhupada calls such a proposition a fool's paradise (Hawaii, 1975):

There should be ideal life, at least the leaders, the president, the GBC. They will show the example, and they (the mass of devotees) will follow. Then it is beneficial. And all of them are fools? Then it is fool's paradise. At least, in the blind association, at least if one man has got eyes, then he can lead all the blind men. But if all of them are blind, then it is fool's paradise. So somehow or other, we have got now a position. People like us. So we should not spoil by personal sense gratification. That is my request.

Open-eyed enthusiasm means that first we see if our activities are indeed favorable service to the Lord. The author implies that if he thinks so, we need not decide for ourselves. But deciding for ourselves is precisely what Prabhupada wants us to learn, hence his statement that our society is for training people in independent thoughtfulness. Solving the problems that impede our society from becoming ideal is favorable service to the Lord. Closing out eyes to the problems is irresponsible. Closing them and advocating enthusiasm is even more so.

One gets the distinct feeling that the unspoken part of the Chairman's Message, is that independent thoughtfulness is a certification of indolence, a sort of spiritual malady caused by a lack of enthusiasm, "the healing balm of spiritual ills." This does not make sense. In *Bhagavad-gita* the Lord does not heal Arjuna by preaching enthusiasm. Rather, his doubts are removed by an infusion of knowledge. Then Arjuna's enthusiasm naturally followed. Here we get enticed to ignore the doubt and simply become enthusiastic. In other words, we get hype. Besides, why assume that there is a general lack of enthusiasm? Why preach this line? I know many devotees, who are enthusiastic about the path of bhakti, but not enthusiastic about the institutional experience. Is this preaching for those persons? If so, it is entirely the wrong approach. A much better approach is to find out the concerns of these devotees and address those issues with logic and reason. Solve problems. Then naturally they become proud of the institution of which they are a part and will broadcast its glories far and wide. No hype is required.

We are a society rife with problems of every variety and the rank and file devotee would like to see energy directed to solving them. That will boost enthusiasm far more than this message. Devotees are mature enough now to know instinctively that the hiding-one's-head-in-the-sand approach, waiting for divine intervention to solve problems, is not the way to go. They want neither hype nor cynicism. They want realism.

Hype of this variety--that strives to focus people on the institutional goals and minimize their concerns by implying that the problem is that they lack enthusiasm for taking a risk for Krsna--is unnecessary. It is manipulative, hence it reflects a low grade of integrity, an insincere attitude towards the individual, and a fundamental lack of respect for the reader's intelligence. The author is practicing two things he denies. He's hyping the reader and is cynical towards his reader's intelligence.

Further, the passage quoted implies that preaching for the society's goals is the only kind of risk that will make us recognized by Krsna. What about preaching among devotees? What about training them to refine their capacity to distinguish reality from illusion, will that not please Krsna and Srila Prabhupada?

Also, Prabhupada preaches that we should take risks for Krsna, but did he use that as an excuse not to attend to the administrative and other needs of ISKCON? Did Prabhupada brush aside personal problems of his disciples by preaching enthusiasm and taking risks for Krsna? My experience is that our Founder-Acarya was proactive and personal in solving-problems. This is supported by the testimony of scores of devotees whose memoirs I had the good fortune to read while working as one of the researchers assisting Satsvarupa Gosvami with Prabhupada's biography. Prabhupada's solution to problems was not preaching about "the balm to all spiritual ill" as if the problem was nonexistent.

The Chairman continues:

That is Srila Prabhupada's request of each and every member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. As GBC chairman in this Centennial year, I can only humbly echo that request: Maharajas, Prabhus and Prabhis, please take a risk to be recognized by Krishna. If every ISKCON devotee becomes enthusiastic in this way, that will automatically keep this movement healthy: actively intelligent and winning tangible results in pure devotional service.

One marked difference between us and Srila Prabhupada is that he embodied all that he preached; he was above the modes; he didn't just say so or assume so. We are striving to arrive; he was there. The assumption is that all this enthusiasm and preaching will automatically end in our being Krsna conscious, but the evidence, or rather the feedback from reality, is that it ain't necessarily so. We have to spread Krsna consciousness to ourselves before we can spread it elsewhere and get glory, recognition, or whatever. We have to take the pains and go through the change in heart that is required for us to become Krsna conscious. We have to do it from the inside-out. Right now we--or at least a significant number of us--are doing it on the outside. The proof is that our dynamics are dysfunctional. We are told, "If every ISKCON devotee becomes enthusiastic in this way, that will automatically keep this movement healthy: actively intelligent and winning tangible results in pure devotional service." This is grand talk, but how will this automatically make our movement healthy? Will we automatically practice more personalism? Will we automatically eliminate our *anarthas*? We will automatically transcend *rajas* and *tamas*? Considering that the answer to all these questions is no, then where is the health?

The *parampara* science of bhakti is not being explained, so this is really a pep talk about the institution's aims and objectives.

Utsaha is but only one of six requirements for success in devotional service. Also, Prabhupada said, "Endeavor executed with intelligence is enthusiasm." But where is the intelligence even in the attempt to evince *utsaha* in the reader? On the contrary, active intelligence is being glorified, for the obvious reason--it fulfills the institution's goals. Meanwhile, our Founder-Acarya several times said that the primary business of ISKCON is to

create a "lazy intelligent class of men," *brahmanas*, the brain, of the social body. If one knows this fact, one naturally wonders, "Why is active intelligence being glorified in this missive at the total exclusion of the lazy intelligent?"

Obviously, the author is caught in and limited by his own paradigm. He is of the active intelligent class himself (*rajo-guna*) and so he is unable to see merit in the lazy intelligent class. More than once he alludes to the lazy intelligent in a pejorative way by implying that they are just "idle meditators."

It takes wisdom to see through bluff and bluster and appreciate that passionate intensity masquerading as enthusiasm is but a substitute for real confidence earned through experience, practical skill, wisdom, and mature realization in the philosophy. Indeed there is a close connection between the passionate state of mind and a lack of these three--enthusiasm, confidence, and faith. Passionate intensity may serve as a substitute for all three, as his message is proving. Discerning persons, therefore, are not taken in by passionate intensity. They look beyond form; they seek content; or, as the Chairman might prefer, they look beyond shadow and seek substance.

As we shall see, this author denies any affiliation with *rajo-guna*, despite it being the whole timbre of his message, yet the reader is expected to assume that it is all transcendental. In other words, despite the symptoms of *rajas* heavy in the air, the reader must deny that perception and see divine significance where none exists.

He goes on:

Now some of our critics see the signs of ISKCON's progress as evincing nothing more than *rajo-guna*. That's one risk we have to take in being enthusiastic--that we'll be criticized. But the greater risk is that we may actually fall victim to the mode of passion. It has happened, and it will continue to happen.

To my knowledge, no one has criticized the progress of ISKCON as evincing nothing more than *rajo-guna*; however, it so happens, I have shown by analysis that authoritarian dynamics--which is not progress by any stretch of the imagination--is a symptom of *rajo-guna*, which will lead to nothing but disaster for our society. To repeat Krsna's scientific teachings is our sacred duty. To show where the society departed from the right dynamics is service.

In *Our Mission Part I*, I explained the difference between authoritarian and humanitarian religion and showed that they were impersonal and personal dynamics respectively. I also cited evidence of impersonal dynamics in our routine way of dealing with problems. Also, I showed that the authoritarian dynamic is symptomatic of the mode of passion. It is that which is hindering our progress, because intelligent men and women will not agree to live in such an atmosphere for long.

The author agrees with my concerns, it seems, because he writes that "the greater risk is that we will actually fall victim to the mode of passion," which gives stringent results. He says it has happened and will continue to happen. He seems resigned to it. Why must it continue to happen in the society that purports to be the most civilized, most intelligent, most scientific, and the positive alternative? Surely we can do *something* about the dynamics, provided we have the desire. Someone once said, "If you think 'I can' you probably can, but if you think 'I can't' you surely won't." Difficult to refute.

Unfortunately, this leader of our society, despite the theme of his message, does not think think "I can." Very interesting. Yet his message is not hype. The inherent contradiction between his personal attitude and his message did not escape the notice of the writer of the Foreword. Upon reading the above part of the message he wrote: "I find this statement to be a

revelation of hopelessness. I don't like this kind of statement. In my understanding they reveal an irresponsible attitude. If I were the author, I would have said: It has happened in the past and we have to be extremely careful if we don't want it to happen again." The *sattvic* attitude in this stance is self-evident.

We should never forget, amidst our reflection on the mistakes of the past, and our planning of safeguards for the future, that the only purpose of this movement is to fight the war with maya.

True enough. And the authoritarian dynamic is maya. His "message" reeks of *rajo-guna*, which is also maya. So where is this war being fought? Fighting maya outside the movement is one thing--it must go on--but what about fighting maya within our movement and even among the ranks of the leaders? That fight is even more important. *Bhagavatam* says it is the highest welfare work and in *Bhagavad-gita* the Lord says that preaching to His devotees pleases him the most.

How can an "ordinary" devotee sift through all this verbiage from a leader in the movement who is fortified with titles such as guru, GBC and *sannyasi*? How does one find substance amidst the familiar rhetoric of vainglory that we typically use to get devotees to deny their perceptions and concerns and simply produce for the institution? When are we going to get real? Like any good hype message, this author has no answers. He simply blunders along shredding his imaginary strawman opponent:

In war, there will always be casualties. No matter what happens, to repeat Prabhupada's own words, "idle meditation" is not an option. That is the lesson of *Bhagavad-gita*. Anyway, for one who risks everything in the fight, without duplicity, fully depending upon Krishna, the Lord's full protection is guaranteed. There's a whole Planet Earth to be won for Prabhupada and Krishna, if we can just be enthusiastic in the real sense of the word.

Here we go. "In war there will always be casualties." But are these from legitimate enemy fire or friendly fire? How long are we going to hide behind this statement to avoid facing our responsibilities as leaders to create a wholesome atmosphere in the society, a house in which the world can live? When will we stop rationalizing?

True there is a whole Planet Earth to be won, but what about attending to those we have already won. Do they just become fodder, because, after all, in war there must be casualties? By the end of his message, the author's intention is clear. We should never focus on our individual needs and the quality of our experience in the society. We should just be enthusiastic about

The good ship Hari Nama, the good ship of book production and distribution, the good ship of prasadam distribution, the good ship of congregational preaching, the good ship of improving management and administration, the good ship of temple construction, the good ship of rural and Varnasrama development, the good ship of educating our next generation of devotees, the good ship of constructing a transcendental city in Sridhama Mayapur--may all those weighty and important projects of the good ship ISKCON be raised higher and higher by the floodtide of your enthusiasim to serve Srila Prabhupada and Krsna.

This is precisely an example of what Marx considered an opiate. It implicitly says, "Don't pay attention to the problems and your wants. Do something weighty and important and that will make you weighty and important. If you are unhappy in the process; if you are somehow shrinking; or sentimental fanaticism is replacing the unfolding of your powers of reason; if your sense of love and justice crumbles; if you become alienated from yourself, experiencing fear and trembling instead of courage, that is your fault. Worst of all, if you question, if you don't go with the flow, we will come down on you so heavy, you won't know what hit you. Just see what happened to the other fools who dared to question. See how they fell victim to the mode of passion and became casualties of the war--with the authorities, that is."

This attitude conveniently denies the mode of passion driving the attitude itself. The Chairman's Message is if you want to avoid being an idle meditator, a victim of the mode of passion, and a casualty of war, then ignore your perceptions and instead of trusting your own intelligence, let me tell you what you ought to think. He is doing exactly what Kay Porterfield, the author of *Blind Faith: Recognizing and Recovering From Dysfunctional Religious Groups*, said. She explains dysfunctional systems and how they maintain a distorted reality: "To avoid being punished or shunned, group members learn to stifle their feelings, to deny their perceptions, and to give away their power."

If the chairman would desist from such oblique presentations, meant to inoculate the reader's intelligence against critical reasoning, and instead lend an ear and try to put himself in the role of his wards, he is more likely to go beyond hype and cynicism and thereby ultimately elicit the response he seeks from the masses, for such appropriate display of realism would be inspiring all around; it would set the pace down through the ranks of devotees.

The only way to serve others sincerely is not by telling them what their needs are, but by asking them; and then meeting those needs. One would not patronize a restaurant, for example, where the waiters served you according to their whims. Similarly, who will patronize an institution where the leaders didn't care what the members want?

In the course of his message this author verifies the very thing he hopes to deny--that ISKCON has dysfunctional authority in the form of his misuse of his authority to maul the philosophy; dysfunctional obedience, because most devotee readers will read his message and think it just great; and, to top it off, dysfunctional philosophizing.

I should not neglect to point out that the same person was the Chairman of the philosophical committee, and one of the co-authors of the embarrassing book that is supposed to explain how the Lord's eternal associates can fall down from the shelter of the internal potency of the Lord. Like his message, that book is also full of this author's dysfunctional philosophizing. But how many devotees are able to see through all this chimera?

Kay Porterfield, quoted earlier, has some relevant thoughts to consider here (*italics mine*):

In both dysfunctional families and religious groups, rigid boundaries and hierarchical authoritarian structures work only when group members comply with them. Since the emotional needs of individual members are not met in such systems, the potential for rebellion is high. *So strategies develop to convince people that their needs do not deserve to be met and, in fact, people shouldn't have needs. Ironically, the needs that are denied are the very ones that may have originally prompted membership in the spiritual group. When individuals in unhealthy systems honor their own needs, they're seen as disloyal, sinful, or hateful--bad apples that may spoil the others.* As such, individuals risk punishment or expulsion.

This is precisely my experience in ISKCON over many years. Indeed, reading the Chairman's Message between the lines, Kay's explanation is exactly what we get. The Chairman's rationalization for ignoring the individual is that we have weighty and important projects to do for Srila Prabhupada; and, "In war, there will always be casualties." This is used to salve our conscience after we rule by intimidation, bullying, manipulation, and political maneuvering. So if you are displeased, if you protest or criticize, then if you go away--or if we make you walk the plank--that is not our responsibility to own. You are just a casualty of war.

Yes, in war there will be casualties. Nevertheless, our biggest project is people. Without people we have no institution. Having all the above "good ships" at the cost of people is not Srila Prabhupada's idea of a positive alternative. But it will be the result of authoritarianism. Meanwhile, the makers of the casualties always make sure their needs are fulfilled.

The conclusion is that dynamics are very important, vital. As stated before, if we do not achieve the right dynamics here, in the training phase of Krsna consciousness, it is doubtful that we will qualify for the spiritual society in the transcendental realm. Our dynamics, therefore, are intrinsic to our success on the path of bhakti, for we don't learn personalism the day we die, we learn it by practicing it while we are alive.

The indications in this phase of our diagnosis is that we have a seriously alienated institution on our hands; but we cannot jump to conclusions. In a group organism, one must pore over several individuals in order to be confident of one's analysis. . .

Chapter Eleven - A Further Diagnosis

So always the entire fault is on the dissatisfied, the dissatisfying party is always fully innocent and the dissatisfied fully guilty. (Somaka Maharaja in a 1994 paper to the GBC, In Search of Harmony)

Again, we want to know if bureaucratic alienation has taken hold of our institution. If the internal publication created for the leaders to reach out to the masses is tainted with symptoms of alienation, then it is a safe bet that the infection, like the tendrils of a portugese man-o-war, has reached far into the depths of the society.

Immediately following the "Chairman's Message,"analyzed in the previous chapter, was the GBC Journal's letter section. This issue has only one letter, written by a GBC-officer-for-life, but according to a GBC officer I consulted, while Prabhupada wanted his GBC to be "for life" this one is "no-longer-active." This was his elegy to hype and cynicism:

I would like to congratulate all the devotees who helped to publish the GBC Journal. It is absolutely essential that we develop this program in which the GBC reaches out and effectively communicates to the devotees in general.

A terrific opening. Communication is certainly important and a Journal is a terrific facility for it. If the devotees can have access to the GBC via the journal and the GBC can respond to their concerns, then this forum is "absolutely essential," vital and alive. The program must be

developed. Indeed it is overdue. Unfortunately, a great opening doesn't automatically lead to a great middle and ending:

Having been on the GBC for over 25 years, I can say without hesitation that the current GBC is the most mature group we have ever had. Everything increases in Krishna consciousness.

This does not say a whole lot, but because of the stature of the person saying it, most readers will see depth of meaning where there is little. A hard-headed realist--i.e. one who does not accept anything blindly but with care and caution--would think, "If the GBC is the most mature we have ever had, I have no objection, but show, don't tell." Here we have a GBC man, an "inactive" one, who in a fit of inspiration is active long enough to tell us what is reality. Gazing down from Olympus, he has the total perspective of what's happening. We in the trenches need only tune in to him so we can get an authentic grasp on reality. After all, we lack any ability to process our own experiences. No doubt he must have gazed too long to one side, thus forgetting that several members of his most mature body had to be penalized two years in a row for "philosophical deviations" over the *raganuga* fiasco in Vrndavana, which is still impacting on our society. Meanwhile, almost without skipping a beat, the ringleaders have moved on to greener pastures--university education, becoming the dog of Srila Prabhupada in record time, penning books to enlighten us about the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gita* and so on.

By the end of this brief message, it will be clear that the readers' opinion of their own experience with the GBC does not matter at all. What matters is this particular inactive GBC's opinion. He is not even attending the meetings. He has become an inaccessible god, sitting in bureaucratic Olympus, gazing down with lambent vision on us lesser mortals and casting out his absolute opinion. Everything increases in Krsna consciousness, including the distance between the elder statesmen of the society and the rank and file members. This is but a symptom of alienation. How a person can be self-realized and self-estranged at the same time is an interesting point to ponder. The letter from Olympus continues:

Lingering cynicism about the GBC is due to ignorance.

A nice, clear, declarative statement. If you have lingering cynicism about the GBC it is your problem, your ignorance. Could your cynicism be based on past experience, or even present experience? The answer is no. Your experience is all mythical. A valid experience is what the inaccessible gods deign to tell you is your experience. If you dare to doubt, disagree, question, you are lacking enthusiasm, according to one analysis; and, according to this one, you suffer from ignorance. The GBC is absolute and perfect, like the Deity, so anything you don't comprehend, any doubts you entertain about them--whether based on fact or imagination--is your ignorance. They have become the Deity. Just as there is no imperfection in the Deity, there must be no imperfection in them, so, whatever we don't comprehend is a defect in us. Recall the discussion on alienation in which it was explained that the institution (meaning the leaders) become the Deity.

It is our grave duty to reach out to the devotees and friends of ISKCON, to communicate regularly so they see the truth, namely that the GBC men are among the finest in the world, and that they are selflessly working with faith and devotion to guide the devotees on Prabhupada's path for the salvation of the world.

When I joined ISKCON, our grave duty was to spread the truth of the mission of Krsna consciousness. We were exhorted to go out in the spirit of the Panca-tattva and deliver the plundered remnants of the storehouse of love of God. Now our grave duty is this truth: "that the GBC men are among the finest in the world, and that they are selflessly working with faith and devotion to guide the devotees on Prabhupada's path for the salvation of the world." Another fine symptom of institutional alienation--now the leaders have become the object of faith.

The necessity of broadcasting this "truth" is indicative of an existing lack of faith. The question this letter should address is why is there a lack of faith and how that lack could be solved. The present letter may convince some ignorant cynics, but it is at best a temporary measure, because the cause of faithlessness will not go away by being ignored or labeled ignorance.

Of course he must mention "Prabhupada's path." Including Prabhupada's name legitimizes everything. I never thought I'd see the day when his name would be used to sanctify things that have nothing to do with what he stood for, the same way Jesus is used.

As for "selflessly working with faith and devotion to guide the devotees" and "Prabhupada's path," this "inactive" or quasi-GBC man's contribution is to go to University in pursuit of vainglory. Selfless? If taken to mean without a self, because of being estranged from one's self, then I could not agree more. But such an interpretation would be difficult to reconcile with "faith and devotion" and the rest of the sentence.

It is interesting that the GBC Chairman wants us to go beyond hype and cynicism with enthusiasm, but it is okay for him and this letter writer to hype us. If they presume us to be ignorant and cynical, why not simply remove our doubts? Knowledge is recognized universally to be the effective cure for ignorance, is it not?

The letter under discussion finishes with a flourish:

I earnestly beg the publishers of this journal to continue and expand this vital publication so that we may fully restore sanity, reverence, and legitimate authority to our movement.

I remember the days when we would have spoken about BTG like this, but now Back To GBC is the magazine of the Hare Krsna movement. It is not that the sober, wise, considerate, and personal dealings of the GBC will restore sanity, reverence, and legitimate authority to our society, but the *GBC Journal*, which is obviously a propaganda organ for the power elite of our society.

In other words, if you don't agree that the GBC is wonderful, not only are you ignorant, you are insane, irreverent, and do not respect authority. You may have reverence for Srila Prabhupada, and respect his authority and the authority of the *sastra*, and you may revere Prabhupada's instruction that we should respect those who command respect and not demand it, but according to the logic of this author, that is not good enough, for you are insane. Small wonder, therefore, that the letter section of the Journal begins with this announcement:

Everything is perfect in ISKCON!

How do we know? Because nobody's writing. We welcome letters from all ISKCON friends and members. The GBC executive committee will answer all inquiries. Selected letters and answers will be published in this column, subject to editing for brevity and clarity. Write to GBC Journal, P.O.Box 1119, Alachua, FL, or e-mail 104044.35522@compuserve.com.

Interesting. I wrote a whole book saying that everything is not perfect in ISKCON and it was the GBC executive body itself that gave ultimatums to punish me for speaking up, with no discussion and probably before reading the book. They hardly answered my concerns. Indeed the body formed even more restrictive "laws" for the society in 1996. The aware devotees are not writing to the *GBC Journal*, because they know what to expect, hype or cynicism; and, if their questions are penetrating enough, punishment in some form--loss of service, ostracization, ad hominem attacks and so on.

Besides, why should insane people write letters in the first place? After a letter like this inactive GBC's only the sane (sychophants) will write, with lavish praises. Then the GBC's gets to hear confirmation of what they want to believe, namely that everything is perfect in ISKCON.

In history, several totalitarian leaders--Papa Doc Duvalier, Idi Amin, Bokassa, Joe Stalin, Fidel Castro, Pol Pot, Benito Mussolini, to name just a few--have worked on the premise that smooth and efficient running of any state or organization is best achieved if they get rid of everyone who does not see eye to eye with them. The interesting thing is that in every instance, life under these leaders was, in a word, dismal. And definitely not spiritual.

You may think the allusion extreme. Indeed it is. Obviously the quality of life in ISKCON should be a far cry from the regimes of people like Castro and so on. But when you read the actual words of a current top leader in our movement (in the chapter called "A Knock 'em Dead Lecture") you will agree that we have every reason to be concerned. We may not have the atrocities comparable to these madmen, but the atmosphere of fear and suspicion, bullying and intimidation, of psychological persecution, is bad enough. These things make for a dismal life.

My point is, why struggle to create ISKCON if it will be even remotely similar to the societies run by these authoritarian rulers?

II

Older members of our society cannot understand why the most sublime process should be so exasperating. Younger devotees can't believe that the politics, power-plays, impersonalism, pettiness, slander, malice, viciousness, etc, go all the way to the top. They think, "The backbiting in the society is the pits. The impersonalism is the pits. Krsna consciousness is supposed to be a bowl of cherries, but I'm so fallen that Krsna is given me only the pits right now. But the top members of the hierarchy are relishing the most wonderful spiritual cherries and if I can just endure these pits, I'm going to get spiritual cherries too." In this way, the alienation process works on all members of the society.

For example, in the Introduction to *Our Mission Part I*, I explained how a godbrother encouraged me to write books that encouraged institutional self-examination, saying it would be a more vital contribution. I agreed with him, because if we do have an alienated institution, we need books that serve as a conscience for the society. Our conversation was less than two years ago. This year, he has changed his tune. "Everything is wonderful in ISKCON" is his new refrain. But obviously it is not, as the chapter "Casualty Report" makes clear. In two years this godbrother became a fully alienated person himself!

Meanwhile, someone teaches the devotees to start discriminating and to appreciate that if the symptoms of *rajo-guna* are present, such as rampant politics, then the leaders' antics are probably in *rajo-guna* and not something divine, definitely not *lila* or a manifestation of *bhava*. The result is that a ripple of panic runs through the ranks. That person who is doing his duty to the *parampara* by opening eyes (*ajnana timirhandasya jnananjana salakaya*), teaching devotees to distinguish between reality and illusion is scapegoated. Those whom the shoe fits, instead of seeing this as Krsna's arrangement that they have an opportunity to come clean, project all their self-loathing unto the person pushing for an improvement. Out of fear

that they may have to cease their razzmatazz and actually give substance to the devotees. They become vicious like wounded animals.

The still innocent newcomer, seeing the sheer numbers arrayed against the individual who tries to stand up in the face of so much corruption, that he has to be "off," for how could "all the advanced devotees" be against him or her?

Thus there is a tremendous credibility gap for the inexperienced devotee. Who wants to believe that exalted souls, representatives of Srila Prabhupada, "the topmost managerial authority of ISKCON", many of whom are gurus and had so much personal association with Srila Prabhupada, could be brutal behind their masks of advanced Vaisnavism?

Who wants to believe that titles such as GBC, guru, *sannyasi*, "Prabhupada disciple," and Vaisnava apply to persons capable of the most malicious moves against their subordinate godbrothers and other members of the society? Who wants to believe petty jealousy and envy runs all the way to the top? The thought is too disillusioning for one who has risked career, friends, and family relations to join the movement of Lord Caitanya and experience the golden age of Kali-yuga.

The older devotees know the truth, but three things may then happen. The "If-you-can't-lick-'em-join-syndrome" is one possibility. They may play see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil, think no evil as another option. "Evil" here means the truth that runs counter to what is popularly believed. One sees the inconsistencies, but pretends to be aloof. The third possibility is to deny one's perceptions, because having sacrificed all to join ISKCON, it's not easy to contend with the reality that our idealistic dream has turned into a nightmare. The truth is too disturbing. As someone said, "It's not that we make mistakes because we don't know the truth, it is just that fiction is more comfortable, so we rationalize." So we settle for living in a bubble of illusion.

When a person right in our local community is being singled out for the transcendental jack-boots, we accommodate the transgression of human rights and personalism by saying, "I just want to be peaceful." "I'm so fallen. I have to do my *bhajan*." "I gotta cooperate with the GBC for Srila Prabhupada." And other similar excuses, not appreciating that what is happening next door could happen to me tomorrow.

Aside from creating inhuman indifference to the plight of others, the atmosphere of authoritarianism can also set neighbor against neighbor as one tries to win points with the authorities by spying on the other. The suspicious and paranoid atmosphere is debasing to the maximum. I observed a similar consciousness when I travelled in the Eastern Bloc countries before communism was ousted. Neighbors lived in terror of each other.

In Iran in 1977, we had a friend who was a *mullah*, an Islamic cleric, coming to our center. He disappeared for six months. No one knew what happened. When he reappeared, he had been taken off the street by the Savak, the Shah's secret police, and incarcerated for six months--no trial, no charges, no rights, just intimidation. All these dynamics go on with varying degrees of intensity in our positive alternative society, ISKCON. In the irrational atmosphere of totalitarianism there's no telling who's next.

III

By far one of the most odious of rationalizations, is to hear "We have to cooperate with the GBC for Srila Prabhupada" as an excuse to practice infringement of one's fundamental human rights and outright impersonalism. One GBC godbrother who knew me personally all my years of affiliation with ISKCON, whom I have served under on several occasions totalling up to years, called me long distance from Bombay one evening, and for the better part of an hour badgered me to move out of the temple because of an allegation by two kids in California that I broke ISKCON law. I got the trial and the verdict all in one fell swoop. And the whole thing turned out to be untrue. This is how the phone conversation went:

"Kundali prabhu, Gopal Bhatta's boys are saying that you gave them *jiva* books. Gopal Bhatta is very upset about it. He is a devotee in good standing (not a fact, but the facts are flexible in

our society of men of ideal character. If Gopal Bhatta had a complaint about this caller, he would have been classed a demon and "against Prabhupada"), a senior Prabhupada disciple, and he has complained to the GBC chairman, Bhadrinarayana prabhu, and everyone is upset about the situation. The GBC's are all upset with me. (The GBC is upset with him. This is the real issue). Will you please move out of the temple?"

"But Maharaja, I've done nothing wrong. I did not give books to those boys. I briefly met them and we never even discussed philosophy."

"The GBC's are all upset with you. They are writing messages asking me why do I put up with you in the temple?"

"Maharaja, I have not broken the law. There has been no trial. Upendranatha has admitted that it was he who gave books to those boys, so why must I move out of the temple. How am I being punished for a crime I did not commit and without any due process?"

"Because nobody believes you. I don't believe you didn't do it."

"Even so, Maharaja, there has been no due process."

"Well I'm just trying to do my duty to the GBC and to Srila Prabhupada."

At this point I was really getting disturbed by this conversation. "Doing my duty to the GBC for Srila Prabhupada" was a favorite saying of this godbrother and I had seen it used before to justify one-sided dealings. I protested. "This is not your duty to Srila Prabhupada."

"What do you mean?"

"Your duty to Srila Prabhupada, Maharaja, is to stand up for truth and justice, and to have integrity, to have a moral compass. It is not your duty to blindly do things in the name of cooperation for Srila Prabhupada."

He got huffy. "I don't need you to tell me what is my duty to Srila Prabhupada. Could I speak to Mahamana?"

I gave the phone to the temple President. Maharaja spoke to him for a few moments, then passed the phone back to me, and Maharaja started again with me from square one. I protested just as doggedly and he asked me to pass the phone to Mahamana for the second time. This went on to a third round before I realized that giving the phone to Mahamana was for Maharaja to get a breather and go back to zero and start anew. We would get nowhere in other words.

More significantly, for the umpteenth time since joining the movement, I saw that he and so many of our leaders fail to appreciate that the administration of justice is the firmest pillar of good leadership. Bullying, coercion, intimidation, character assassination, disregard for due process--these things are all commonplace in our society. One gets tired of it after living in the hope of change for many years running. At this point, therefore, while the phone was still with Mahamana, I walked out of the office. I could not sleep for hours that night, because I was simply stunned that my godbrother would circumvent human decency and strongarm me out of the temple in the name of cooperating with the GBC to please Srila Prabhupada.

To be sure, intelligent people see this as mentally unhealthy and want to stay clear of such an atmosphere. Thus we end up with a situation wherein only the already unstable will submit themselves to our maladjusted dynamics under the banner of the *sankirtana* mission of Lord Caitanya. That is rationalized as Lord Caitanya's mission of saving the *most* fallen, notwithstanding Srila Prabhupada's repeated declaration that ISKCON is for intelligent people. If you are rational your chance of survival in the society is slim, and getting slimmer as the situation worsens.

Chapter Twelve - Casualty Report: Victims of Friendly Fire

Unfortunately in ISKCON today someone who wants to develop this pure service mood is seen as something of a fanatic, they call it "Pure Devotee Disease" and anyone who exhibits it is encouraged to come back down to earth, be realistic and keep on going out there and collecting money and bringing it back to the temple. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to develop attachment and love under such circumstances. Usually the reverse happens, innocent and sincere young people join the movement and by association with the "devotees" who are not very serious and who have their own personal motivations for performing devotional service, these new devotees become more materialistic and move further away from Krishna and Srila Prabhupada by living in temples. (Madhudvisa Dasa, former GBC Officer).

This excerpt from the preface of a booklet Madhudvisa prabhu published in 1994, expressing his frustration at the state of the movement he obviously loves, is but one of several eye-opening and disturbing passages in his book. And by far a strong condemnation of what we now have in Prabhupada's name.

In this chapter, passages from four books by devotees, all Prabhupada disciples, are cited to substantiate that the author of *Our Mission* is not alone in his perception of the society, in his analysis that we are a fully alienated bureaucratic organization, and his concern for its future. Let's look at a few more from Madhudvisa prabhu and then selections from the others:

Srila Prabhupada did not want to control everything himself. He wanted to encourage his disciples to take responsibility and use their intelligence in devising ways to spread Krishna consciousness. He wanted his disciples to become competent in all areas of practical work and management as well as being learned in the philosophy and expert preachers. He didn't like centralization or bureaucracy.

As a former GBC man, this author's views regarding the function of a GBC officer are not to be shrugged off. He devotes even more space to discussion of Prabhupada's conception of the GBC which is all in line with the letters from our Founder-Acarya cited previously about how ISKCON's leaders should operate. These GBC roles have been long lost in the mists of time. A GBC man is now a little dictator. Here in Vrndavana decisions are made about services like temple presidents, vice-presidents, and even who should leave the temple without even a token poll of the local devotees, except for the few in the management circle.

Madhudvisa is especially peeved about the caliber of devotees we now recruit and train:

A new type of devotee had surfaced within ISKCON. The pseudo-devotee. These pseudo-devotees feigned attraction to Krishna and Srila Prabhupada and pretended to be following the process of devotional service, however, they were not working for Srila Prabhupada and Krishna. They had their own personal goals for fame, wealth, followers, and sex life.

Following a definition of the impersonalistic concept of "I am God" Madhudvisa prabhu does an excellent job of describing the mentality of the jealous and envious mundane man in the dress of a Vaisnava:

This attitude often leads to a devotee who may be following the regulative principles of devotional service, chanting Hare Krishna, reading profusely, and even performing quite severe austerities in devotional service. Because of these activities he may be regarded as an advanced devotee by other devotees. But, the underlying philosophy motivating his activities is wrong. He is not working for his spiritual master and Krishna. He doesn't necessarily even believe in Krishna or have any faith in his spiritual master. His motivation is completely selfish. He is thinking that if I study all these books, if I get up early in the morning, if I chant and dance enthusiastically in the association of the other devotees, they will think I'm a very advanced devotee. Then I can become the temple president and I will be in control of the devotees in the temple. I'll be able to get them to do anything I want. . . because the temple president is the representative of Krishna. . . he's non-different to Krishna. . . he should be worshiped like Krishna. . . then why stop at temple president? I can become the GBC, then all the devotees in the country will worship me. Why stop there? I can be Jagat Guru (guru of the whole world), then everybody will worship me!

Madhudvisa is on a roll. Next he describes the alienated devotee tangled in the bureaucratic struggle for survival far better than my feeble attempts:

There are many pseudo-devotees who are not at all interested in Krishna consciousness or Srila Prabhupada. They are simply interested in exploiting the Hare Krishna movement and the devotees for their own ends. They develop a new philosophy by utilizing the Mayavada techniques of word jugglery and redefinition and have managed to turn Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON into a mundane business organization. An organization of the cheaters and the cheated. Although they are outwardly preaching Krishna consciousness, and some are even great scholars with the ability to speak on Krishna consciousness very convincingly, much of it is false. Ultimately many are after followers, fame, profit, distinction, etc. So although, in many cases, even though the preaching is completely in accordance with Srila Prabhupada's teachings and books, because the preachers' desires are material, not spiritual, the effect of their preaching and Srila Prabhupada's preaching are totally different.

Both in this book and in the earlier volume of *Our Mission*, I've been saying that while our doctrine is wonderful, our dynamics are terrible and Madhudvisa prabhu has confirmed it nicely in the above quote and in the next one:

The pseudo-devotees, however, don't get any help from Krishna. They are able, for a short time, to make a false show of Krishna consciousness, but they can only attract sentimentalists and other envious people like themselves. So gradually the Hare Krishna movement degenerated into a mundane organization. It became like hell for serious devotees. As a result many

devotees were forced to leave as they could no longer practice Krishna consciousness peacefully in ISKCON.

With no display of linguistic gymnastics Madhudvisa names the situation as he sees it--we have demons in the guise of devotees:

As a devotee is prepared to surrender his life, his energy, everything to preach Krishna consciousness, the demons are similarly prepared to sacrifice everything and dedicate their whole life and energy to stopping the advancement of the Krishna consciousness movement. Personally it amazes me how dedicated these demons are. They won't stop their nefarious activities even though they are suffering greatly and it is as plain as day that Krishna is God, Srila Prabhupada is a pure devotee and they are demons. Still they want to be gurus and take as many disciples as possible with them to the darkest regions of hell to suffer perpetually in the most unbelievable agony.

ISKCON has been transferred from a society that was turning demons into devotees to a society turning devotees into demons. . . instead of decreasing their material desires, their material desires increased more and more. Many, many thousands of devotees went through this process and left the Hare Krishna movement in a worse state than when they joined. ISKCON was now bringing out the worst in people, instead of reviving their long forgotten love for Krishna.

Devotees subjected to this treatment suffered greatly. Some committed suicide, many went crazy and most lost faith in Krishna consciousness. . .

After analyzing the Zonal Acarya philosophical deviation, Madhudvisa prabhu points out, as I did in *Our Mission*, that the reform movement was a failure:

With the "zonal acarya" system in tatters due to the fall of many of the so-called acaryas the GBC established a new system which allowed any disciple initiated by Srila Prabhupada to apply to become a guru. This considerably increased the number of gurus in ISKCON, but did nothing to solve any of the problems resulting from the "zonal acarya" days. The qualification for becoming a guru seems to now be something of a political matter between the local temple authorities and the GBC. . .spiritual qualifications don't seem to be the main criteria. It has already become obvious that a number of these new gurus are far from the standard required to even be called a devotee, what to speak of a guru.

Unfortunately, after Prabhupada left his body, ISKCON institutionalized the concept of guru and rubber-stamped some unqualified men as guru. . . They succeed in attracting some sentimental disciples and some envious ones as well who wanted to take their position. However, sincere devotees found it very difficult to stay in the new ISKCON built around the false idea that the new "acaryas" were on the same level as His Divine Grace, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. . .

However it is not GBC approval that makes a devotee a qualified acarya. It is his sincere desire to please Srila Prabhupada and Krishna, and such an acarya does not have to be approved by anyone, he is self-effulgent. . .

As the Gaudiya Math was left behind by Srila Prabhupada, ISKCON may be left behind by the next self-effulgent acarya.

He is philosophically right about the GBC's approval not being the way to recognize a qualified *acarya*. "The mahatma is not created by rubber-stamp." Prabhupada said it so many times and so many ways. How could we fall into that mire? There is only one answer: Alienation.

Without doubt, several of the themes already touched on as well as ones yet to come have been verified in Madhudvisa's *What Happened to the Hare Krishnas?*

Another publication, by ex-members of ISKCON who sought shelter elsewhere, because of their run-in with dysfunctionality in the society of their spiritual master. They met with dogmatic insistence that they could not follow their hearts (and sastric injunctions) by accepting as *siksa-guru* the person in whom they have faith, in this case a highly qualified Vaisnava. In the book *Our Affectionate Guardians*, the author, Visnu Maharaja, document their experiences after Srila Prabhupada's passing in 1977, showing that ISKCON has a history of institutionalized *vaisnava aparadha*. (Readers should note that the original version of *Our Affectionate Guardians* was not widely circulated. A considerably shorter version came out in the Kartika season of 1996. The citations that follow come from the longer version):

Recently, a godbrother was telling me that he read in a newspaper that in a survey about religious movements it was reported that the "Hare Krsna Movement" was a more impersonal one. It is shocking that the movement with the most personal philosophy is considered to be actually more impersonal. But actually, in reality, I have personally experienced in the last 16 years that this is terribly true; the relations between ourselves are very impersonal, diplomatic, political and generally with no real love. For example, I remember that at the beginning when a young devotee would bloop I would go to look for him and try everything to get him back. Now, if even a stalwart devotee that has done twenty or more years of service goes away, it is just a matter of conversation during breakfast.

The above comes from a paper by Somaka Maharaja to the GBC back in 1994. The mention of the reporter proves that our dynamics do not go unnoticed by non-members, but do we address this sort of problem beyond breakfast? Perhaps for public relations purposes, but as far as those on the inside, well. . . Somaka Maharaja reports:

Just a few days ago I was speaking to a god brother explaining to him the situation of a devotee who is now very dissatisfied and lacking faith in the institution. This godbrother was telling me of the very wrong mode that the devotee in question has, and also that this devotee was not making sufficient effort to regain his strength. Although I may agree on many points, in the whole conversation he did not consider for one second what we could do to help him regain faith. The only consideration was what he should do to regain

faith. The entire fault is on the dissatisfied, the dissatisfying party is always fully innocent and the dissatisfied fully guilty.

Another salient point is presented by Visnu Maharaja:

Formerly, the political doctrines of Machiavelli were very much in vogue with several of our GBC leaders. According to the *New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Machiavelli advocated that,

Even religion--for which he had a deep feeling though he was not outwardly pious--was subordinated by him to the state's iron necessity and made a tool of power.

In his principal work, *The Prince*, Machiavelli writes:

It is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them--to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite. One is often forced, in order to maintain the state, to act contrary to faith, friendship, humanity and religion. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those *few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them*; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, which is not prudent to challenge, *one judges by the result*.

Machiavelli is one of the most authoritarian political philosophers ever known. It will be clear that many ISKCON leaders follow his view either knowingly or unknowingly. We have seen two examples already in the last two chapters that Machiavellian draconian techniques are very current. There'll be more in upcoming chapters.

In March 1981, Bhakti-Caru Swami is on record talking to Srila Sridhara Maharaja, expressing his concern for the pre-reform irrational dynamics in our society:

Maharaja, the main consideration is that many of Prabhupada's disciples are leaving the movement. They are quite *unable to tolerate all this nonsense* any more.

Over ten years later, Madhuvisa prabhu's book testifies that the situation is pretty much the same, or worse. Alas, the nonsense goes on, to the extent that it is near impossible to attract intelligent persons to the society Srila Prabhupada mandated for intelligent persons. His disciples are so severely reduced they can be considered nothing but an endangered species. A letter of 1982 to the GBC body from Jayadvaita Swami chronicles some of the elements of concern over the dynamics in our society. Unfortunately, the same letter could have been written this year, with the list of concerns multiplied:

One of our *sannyasi* godbrothers has committed suicide, Srila Prabhupada's seniormost daughter has become bitter to the point of frenzy, the man Srila Prabhupada appointed to complete the Srimad Bhagavatam has left us in frustration and disappointment, an enthusiastic preacher has become discouraged and ensnared in lust and ambition, a main builder of our Vrndavana temple is living like a hermit, several staunch *brahmacaris* have sought shelter in marriage and a depressingly large number of our godbrothers and sisters have quietly or not quietly left Srila Prabhupada's society. Now some devotees are turning in desperation to Sridhara Maharaja. And others are holding on in ISKCON, deeply dissatisfied but nurturing a hope that things will change. . . . Somehow or other, large numbers of Srila Prabhupada's disciples feel strongly disturbed, discouraged, bitter, offended, confused, angry, or unhappy because of their relationship with their godbrothers who have "accepted the mantle" as initiating gurus.

It has become compounded. Now many grand-disciples of Srila Prabhupada are in the same straits--feeling disturbed, disenchanted, confused and angry because the dynamic in ISKCON is unlivable. In Prabhupada's time we also had dysfunctional dynamics, but for determined disciples we had a "court of appeals" in Srila Prabhupada himself. In these dark days, there is only a makeshift of due process and no court of appeals as the leaders close ranks against any perceived enemy, namely whoever questions or disagrees with them and their minions. One is an "enemy" just by not being a flatterer.

After I met with a 13 member GBC sub-committee about *Our Mission*, on my way back to Vrndavana, a GBC officer gave me a well-intentioned warning. "They are out to get you. This year they made resolutions so they can excommunicate you next year." After a four hour session with another GBC member, in which I made it clear that my main problem with the GBC was not that we had a difference of opinion, but the irrational, might-is-right way in which it was resolved. "I question the procedure," I explained. "We have no due process. I cannot accept this. How can I do this and go out and represent the society with faith and conviction?"

I explained that my experience of objectional procedure in dealings with the GBC body occurred on two occasions. The first was the banning of a well-researched book written to resolve the *jiva* -issue, a controversy that was years in the making. The banning was accompanied with an unabashed misrepresentation of the book by citing it out of context. More irrational was that it was only read by two members of a nine-man committee and one other member of the GBC body, yet it was voted on. This unethical conduct passes as behavior of advanced devotees representing Prabhupada.

The second occasion was my mock trial in Mayapur in 1996 over the publication of *Our Mission* to address the issue of authoritarian dynamics in our society. It was not even a mock trial, there was no charge, no notice that I was being invited to a trial; but there was a verdict. What reasonable person will accept this irrational dealings? Upon explaining these points to the GBC man, he confided to me that "There was never any intention to have a real discussion with you. It was all done for the public image. Don't tell anyone that I told you this, but I was present at the discussions in the meeting and the plan was to meet, and then do whatever they wanted, but the ordinary devotees would think there had been some attempt to reconcile with you."

Dear reader, this is the society that you belong to, that you represent to the world in the name of Lord Caitanya and our *acaryas*. You may think, "Well, that's too bad, Kundali, you did not keep your head down," but what if you have an issue tomorrow, or your close friend, or a member of your family? Will you be happy to see them unjustly treated as per all these

examples of irrationality cited here and in other chapters? Are you comforted to be part of what Srila Sridhara Maharaja called "a farce" upon noting that the society makes it difficult for the preachers to be proud of the organization?

If you (the leaders) are efficient enough, if you will consider yourself to be efficient, then give us this thing--that we can march with the flag, with our head erect. We have to go and capture the new (converts), but the old is already going back. They are driven, they are being driven and we are going. The old, important members, who received the grace of our Guru Maharaja, they are being discouraged and becoming indifferent. And we are going to recruit new persons! Is it not a farce?

Another godbrother, Rocana dasa, has also written a book voicing his dissatisfaction with the direction of ISKCON even after the so-called reform, which was more like re-apportioning of the pie, back in the mid-eighties. Rocana's book has an unwieldy title--*How to Successfully Manage the Sankirtana Movement as Demonstrated by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada* --but don't be diverted by his wordiness. Inside it is terse and well researched and as with the authors of the other two books cited thus far, his view is consistent with them and his voice is quite in earnest.

Like Rocana prabhu, there are devotees worldwide who care about and love ISKCON, whose resistance to alienation is strong; they are too attached to having a clear conscience, thus they cannot allow themselves to succumb to the crazy-making dysfunctional extremes that ISKCON has come to represent. Following are extracts from Rocana's book:

I've come to the realization that for those fortunate devotees who sincerely participated in the ISKCON lila during Srila Prabhupada's physical presence, the possibility for them to re-integrate successfully into another community or culture is practically nonexistent. I have come in contact with many Godbrothers who have become desperately anxious about finding a Krsna conscious community they can involve themselves in. Many of them seek a shelter free from the controversial issues that plague the movement. Srila Prabhupada emphasized the need for all his disciples to participate in the communities which he had established, knowing that the neophyte condition of most of his spiritual children would cause them to fall away.

Unfortunately, due to confusion within ISKCON since Srila Prabhupada's departure, many disciples have opted to involve themselves in other asramas or spiritual groups, or they remain in the spiritual purgatory of the material society, rather than try to live in the ruins of their spiritual master's society. Many of those who remain are doing so based on the principle that "a blind uncle is better than no uncle"--at least it's easier to follow the regulative principles and chant 16 rounds, or it's better than getting a job working for a karmi. All such rationalizations rob you of your ability to be honest about your feelings, and true to what your intelligence and common sense tells you.

These are cult dynamics, coercion by using salvation to blackmail. Srila Prabhupada, Rocana writes, had to deal with his leaders going beyond the mandate of their power early on. In a 1969 letter, for instance, Prabhupada wrote:

My Dear Jayapataka,

Please accept my blessings. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated August 7, 1969, and have noted the contents. Regarding Narottama das, our policy should be to keep members as much as possible. . ."

GBC does not mean to control a center. GBC means to see that the activities of a center go on nicely. I do not know why Tamala is exercising his absolute authority. That is not the business of GBC. The president, treasurer and secretary are responsible for managing the center. GBC is to see that things are going nicely but not to exert absolute authority. That is not in the power of GBC. Tamala should not do like that. The GBC men cannot impose anything on the men of a center without consulting all of the GBC members first. A GBC member cannot go beyond the jurisdiction of his power. We are in the experimental stage but in the next meeting of the GBC members they should form a constitution how the GBC members manage the whole affair. But it is a fact that the local president is not under the control of the GBC. (Letter to Giriraja, 1971)

In the ISKCON of today, this news can evoke the same surprise and wonderment that Arjuna had upon seeing the universal form of the Lord. But the trail of horror stemming from conscienceless dealings does not end with the GBC's infringing on the temple presidents' jurisdiction. There is a spirit of bemoaning the outrage that went on with the *gurukulis*, which is good. Healing and making amends for past transgressions in this area is wonderful, but we should not be lulled into self-congratulations too soon and thus avoid other transgressions that need healing, such as this account of what went on with the women's traveling parties:

We (Rocana and Jagganatha Suta) proved without a doubt that these men were having sex with the women, and were introducing every technique a pimp uses to cajole them. They implemented these techniques to induce the women disciples into collecting as much money as possible. There was no consideration for the philosophic deviation, let alone the devastating effect on the spiritual lives of the women involved, or the risk to Srila Prabhupada's image if this activity become public knowledge.

Of course, this mood was sanctioned by the GBC, who simply ignored detailed reports of such activities. Jaganath Suta dasa and I attempted to bring our well documented report to the attention of Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, who had recently been assigned as the GBC for the Pacific Northwest. Satsvarupa dasa Goswami refused to take decisive action, instead instructing us to bring the issue to Mayapur for the annual meeting, which was months later. In Mayapur, Satsvarupa dasa Goswami stated that these matters should not be brought to the Holy Dhama, that it was offensive. Kirtanananda Swami was furious. The GBC were so attached to these women's parties, which had become a cash cow for their pet projects, that they actually lied to Srila Prabhupada.

The women were deceived by their GBC into believing that Srila Prabhupada had been informed of the situation, and approved it.

Jaggannath Suta dasa became so disgusted with the GBC's lack of concern and action that he left the movement, and later encouraged Robin George to sue ISKCON.

That suit cost millions. Considerably more than the women's party prostituted and degraded themselves to collect. And as Krsna says, the result of action in the mode of passion is like nectar (some collections from the dehumanized women), but poison in the end (payout to lawyers, bad publicity, and money to Robin George). But wonder of wonders, the persons who hid these activities are exalted devotees and Robin George and Jagganatha Suta, (and probably Rocana and myself) are all demons. Ahh, Kali-yuga. It lives up to it's name, "quarrel and hypocrisy. "

Fifty years after the World War, the Japanese have had to make amends to the Korean nation for the use of "comfort women" during the Japanese occupation. There is such a thing as showing integrity after the fact.

The current GBC of Vrndavana, Gopal Krsna Gosvami, does not come out too well in Rocana's account:

Gopal Krsna Swami proudly revealed to me that his airfare alone was greater than the entire yearly budget of the Montreal Temple--over \$150,000 a year in the mid-eighties, not to mention his telephone bills (he once racked up \$600 in long distance charges in one day).

Using a conservative average of \$4,000 a month for phone calls, imagine a year of such phone bills, that's a modest sum of 4,800. Then, although we have considerably more than 10 GBC's multiply that by a modest figure of 10 to represent the number of GBC's who live life on the money-is-no-object platform. That's \$480,000. Now throw in \$150,000 for travel, which is conservative in the mid-nineties. That's 1.5 million. It is safe to say that we spend well over 2 million dollars a year for executive travel and phone communications. So much for simple living and high thinking. It would be worth it, however, if we have efficient management and personal dealings.

Yet in all fairness I have to say that there is a dramatic difference among GBC's of the haves and the have nots. Some GBC's haven't two farthings to rub together for their service. But this lack of opulence is a sign of their insincerity or not having the mercy of Krsna.

As for that particular travelling GBC, whom I have direct experience of his lacking a moral compass, the very day I wrote the above passage someone sent me a copy of a letter put out by the Delhi Life Members protesting his high-spending style, among other things, with funds collected for the huge temple construction. These irate members want the government to repeal the Charitable Institution tax status of ISKCON in India. We don't know if the allegations are true, but Prabhupada used to say, "Where there is smoke, there's fire." He also warned us numerous times that we had to handle the society's affairs with *pukka* integrity and not waste. He wanted every piasha be accountable. Logic dictates, that if our super exec GBC was a high-roller in the mid-eighties, then he is most likely a higher roller in the mid-nineties. As we saw in an earlier chapter, the quasi-GBC declared "Everything increases in Krsna consciousness." That could mean the rate of degradation, rate of unprincipled behavior and so on, because he really did not specify.

Rocana also points out that the Canadian winters are fierce:

Another result of this attitude (regal-money-is-no-object-lifestyle) was that a disproportionate amount of the funds collected was sent off to the BBT. Even to say this was considered a great offense. But to please the gurus and a few brahmacharies, the Deities often did without flower garlands and nice prasadam, and the devotees did without basic necessities like medical and dental care, child care. The spirit of hard-working devotees quickly deteriorates when you can't heat the temple in the middle of a Canadian winter. To add insult to injury, the big guru would then fly into town and be presented with a nicely decorated, warm, apartment, and more opulent prasadam than you could afford to give the Deities. In some cases, the watches these gurus were wearing would have heated the temple all winter.

Rocana prabhu's book is full of quotable passages on a wide range of topics. We've seen here a mere sampling that proves the central thesis of this book, that we have dysfunctional dynamics of an intolerable degree in our society dating back to Prabhupada's time. There are tales of woe from all corners of the globe. One hopes that devotees will write about their experiences and this openness will lead to a more conscientious performance by our leaders. Next we look at *Something Happened on the way to Heaven*. The Foreword reads:

The intention of this book is to provide an historical and perhaps even educational account of certain events that took place. It is not meant to cause offence either to the movement or it's founder, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, to whom I offer my most respectful obeisances.

The author of the above words, Douglas Monckton, collected several interviews and published them in his book. I feature extracts from interviews that show the dysfunctional nature of our dealings in ISKCON, some dating back to Prabhupada's time. This is from Tripurari Swami, an early casualty of the power-driven management at the top of corporate ISKCON. He made the tragic mistake of thinking for himself:

Anyone who was dynamic came under question, he became suspect because we were being told that it was the dynamic tendency displayed by certain individuals that led to the movement's undoing. The fact of the matter is that Krsna consciousness goes on and spreads not because a group of people are evolving at the same time but because some people are evolving at a faster rate. Unfortunately they think if someone becomes too progressive he or she becomes a problem. Yet at the same time we were expected to give all the public eulogy that the disciple had to show when glorifying one of the chosen eleven. It wasn't enough to be quiet and respectful.

If you were simply quiet and respectful, cherishing your relationship with Srila Prabhupada within your heart, the "*acaryas*" back in those days looked on you with suspicion. As one GBC said to me, "There is a question of loyalty." Not to Srila Prabhupada, mind you, but to him. Loyalty to Srila Prabhupada just wasn't sufficient or it was equated with disloyalty to your godbrother. That hasn't changed. Nowadays, if you disagree with a GBC man or the whole body, that is not something to discuss and work through. Instead, "You are against Srila Prabhupada." Alienation again. Tripurari Swami refused to be alienated from his conscience.

This next one is by former GBC officer Atreya Rsi, who got self-estranged and then caught himself, but too late to fit in once he woke up. First he talks about the lack of interest in the leaders to go deeply into the experience of the *state* of Krsna consciousness:

We are all subjective beings, are all living in some relative reality. But even then we can be wholly in touch with what we are experiencing. Prabhupada gave the complete answer. The answer is the experience. Experience of Krsna consciousness can only be tasted if we are actually looking for that experience. Life has to be experienced, philosophy has to be experienced, chanting has to be experienced. To the extent we rule a movement without that experience, there will be imbalance. Why do people end up in an organization seeking something other than those deepest experiences? Why did we ever have to have a meeting of the heads of society where everything but those experiences were being discussed? If any suggestion of those experiences were brought up for which all these books were written, for which all these goals were set by the founder of this movement, people would fall asleep or become bored. I'm not putting others down, I just observed these things.

That has not changed, but there is vying to make it seem like it has, because some figured out that it may make them a more attractive commodity on the disciples market. Yes, there will be imbalance. But worse, there is no concerted attempt to get the experience, so there is no light at the end of this tunnel. Atreya again:

I had no deeper inner experiences of who I was. When I came to the movement I felt that a lot of those things I was looking forward to being promised. My disappointment in Krishna consciousness was primarily with myself, with my own experiences. I somehow succumbed to assumptions, phrases, ideas and philosophy without actually experiencing them or moving in a direction where I would experience them. I didn't come to this movement to save the world, I came to save myself. While I must agree that the philosophy of Krishna consciousness makes a lot of sense because it's popularly criticizing everything else, it didn't give me that experience I was looking for. It would be interesting to see how things would have evolved if Prabhupada had stayed. I'm not decrying Krishna consciousness, I just wasn't honest enough with myself. After all, if you actually experienced real Krishna consciousness why would you ever leave?

An excellent question; but self-estranged leaders never ask this question. If they did they may have to face the reality that the institution is in disarray and have to stop enjoying and start serving those who they lead. That's too horrifying a thought to entertain.

Another tale of alienation follows. Bhudara prabhu gives a glimpse of our policy of everything for the institution (the new deity in the alienation process), but nothing for the ordinary salt-of-the-earth foot-soldier:

I was in Boston which is near New York and although Prabhupada came to New York many times, it was a long time before we were allowed to go there and see him. In fact I had already been living in the temple for three years distributing books. When Prabhupada was with us I legitimately felt that we were at the vanguard of a monumental revolutionary undertaking. We were

ready to sacrifice our blood, sweat and tears to play even a small part in that. But if you were to ask me now I wouldn't know, maybe due to my lack of involvement. After leaving it was a least three years before a devotee called me up and that was because the temple needed a donation for a burst water pipe. I think this represents a serious flaw in the society. While they want to develop and maintain a healthy rapport with the general public they have failed to produce a normal, healthy, legitimate society that shows concern for its members.

I am struggling to support my wife and family but cannot expect to get any help from the temple. Can you imagine devotees who leave after leading a monastic life for 10 or 15 years and having to find a job of work? They're middle-aged and psychologically crippled, the changes are enormous. It's traumatic. That's why devotees will hold on assiduously to their position of power within the society, even if everything else is falling apart, just as long as they don't have to face that challenge of having to struggle again in the outside world.

For myself for the past two years I've had a shaved head and dressed like a devotee, I've been as close as I could be to being a devotee but I've realized that as far as my wife and children are concerned, their education and so forth, I'm really on my own.

ISKCON America did not have a monopoly on dysfunctionality. English devotees had their share of the impersonal corporate productivity mode. Chris tells her experience:

I found that sleeping on the cold floor in the middle of winter quite difficult. There would be so many women allocated to a room and we would always fight for the best spot, which would invariably be as far away as possible from the window. I just wasn't prepared for these austere living conditions. We were then sent out on the street to collect funds at all hours of the day and night. Those of us who were considered good at collecting were duly rewarded by the management who upgraded our living quarters by moving us into a warm house with comfortable bunk-beds. I later discovered that their real motive for this move was to safeguard their "golden goose."

It was well known that when a woman married in the movement, she would almost always give up collecting in preference to raising a family. So by shipping us out of the temple away from the men, the management felt they were able to lessen the chances of anything like that happening. so the money kept rolling in. I must have personally collected 100,000 pounds before finding the man I wanted.

That turned out to be an abusive marriage. Life in ISKCON does weird things to one's mind and causes one to subvert his character. A former temple president who left the society, became a drunk, attempted suicide, and his life became a wreck in so many ways. Later he came to the temple in tears and told a godbrother, "I did things and ill-treated people just for the money. I lost my way. I was never like this before." He admitted that he even plotted to commit murder with some other "devotee" but somehow he avoided doing it. The group

dynamic subverted his character. This is a well-known phenomenon in group therapy. But we devotees of Lord Caitanya accept no responsibility for these changes our comrades go through. We simply sneer on the person who gave the most productive years of his life to the movement.

I remember well when this devotee had problems and left. I was living in the same temple as the person who wrote these immortal opening words on a paper urging reform:

The root of all problems now facing ISKCON is that we, the disciples of Srila Prabhupada, have not established proper Vaisnava relationships among ourselves.

I approached this author several times about contacting that temple president who had fallen, since I knew his disturbed devotee regarded the author as a friend and respected him. But this author was not interested. He complained about the cost of the phone calls and made some cutting remarks about the godbrother in trouble. I gathered that we can talk the talk, but we rather be comfortable than extend ourselves on another's behalf. As fate would have it, so-called reform did happen, but not of our Vaisnava relationships.

Also, as fate would have it, I later met the brother of the author one day in Virginia and listened in rapture as he told me, not knowing my own closeness to the reform attempt, the glorious work of his brother who single-handedly saved ISKCON from complete and utter disaster. It was nothing short of a schoolboy fantasy of the success of his first date with the prettiest of the cheerleaders. Some unknown poet in the past, must have had a similar experience to mine which prompted him to write: "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost."

Living inside or outside of the Krishna consciousness society is not the measure of one's sincerity. There are so many factors that come into play, individual, social, economic, sociological, psychological; who can put a finger on it? Yet it was a lot easier to dismiss people as fallen and envious etc., rather than to try and understand them.

The author of *Something Happened on the way to Heaven* notes:

Drstadyumna feels the movement has become progressively institutionalized over the years. A current high-ranking member of the movement's hierarchy explains why he feels that institutionalization was necessary.

"Some things have improved beyond all recognition while other have been lost to some extent. I don't see it all as bad, I don't see it all as good. Some people bemoan the fact that the movement has become institutionalized, but the sad fact of life is unless it becomes institutionalized it won't survive, it won't do the things it was supposed to do. There are other people who believe in permanent revolution, permanent change, but it seems to me that our first responsibility is to preserve what Prabhupada gave us. Expansion and development come later but the first thing is to preserve. Unless we have some kind of institutional framework, I don't see how that can be done."

The above spiel ignores the fact that the most important consideration in preserving what Prabhupada gave us includes his instruction to train independently thoughtful devotees and not to make bureaucracy, for it would spoil the whole thing. Prabhupada wanted us to be primarily brahminical and secondarily institutionalized. This is crystal clear from his numerous letters and from a personalistic understanding of our philosophy. Part of that is permanent change, because really alive Krsna consciousness never stagnates. Prabhupada called it "Boiling the milk." So, the unnamed speaker of the above paragraph has to be an alienated "current high-ranking member of the movement's hierarchy."

All this airing of fouled laundry can serve a good purpose. It can embarrass us for our improper actions and consequently cause us to regret and rectify our dealings. This kind of response to one's gaffes is described by the Lord as a symptom of the mode of goodness, which leads to God-realization (*sattvam yad brahma-darsanam*).

Unfortunately, people caught in the vortex of *rajas* and *tamas* often fail to take advantage of such opportunities. As we saw in Zimbardo's prison experiment, those brimming with self-contempt often become more arrogant and vicious in response, along the lines of the letter quoted a few chapters earlier in which the GBC member was promising to be twice as nasty, vengeful, political, etc. These are very sad states of affairs for any spiritual organization, and particularly so for those in the line of succession from Lord Caitanya and His venerable followers such as Srila Rupa and Sanatana Gosvamis.

Some people see only the negative possibilities and will consider that airing the internal blunders of the society as ill-intended, revenge motivated, and so on. Some will want to opiate themselves with "krsna-katha," being unwilling to face the reality of the group organism. We cannot escape from illusion into reality by ignoring the duty we have to our spiritual master to address problems. Mental health is based on a problem-solving approach to life, and we have to be mentally healthy to become Krsna conscious.

Actually, even if ill motives or mixed motives are there, the fact is that there is immense value in facing our institutional dark side. This has proven useful in individual therapy and it is as valid in group healing. Denial is never progressive or growthful. Unfortunately, just as the instinctive impulse of any organism is to preserve its life, the instinctive nature of a dysfunctional group organism is to preserve itself. In so doing, being already dysfunctional, its members will generally resort to yet more of the same sub-standard dynamics that even they abhor when perpetrated on themselves.

Case in point: a prominent *sannyasi* in our society was heard to bemoan the dysfunctional dealings he has had to endure since joining the movement in the sixties. "You'll never believe the shit I've had to put up with to stay in this movement." Yet he has not learned to be rational by seeing the conduct of the irrational; rather he has a global reputation for being irrational when he cannot get his way. He abhors civil discussion and is quick to assume the authoritarian demeanor.

When I protest these irrational dealings that are virtually everyday occurrences in our society, the defenders of the guilty parties like to make me believe that it is not them, it is me. They say "Kundali is impossible. He's too contentious. (i.e. He's not a sheep). He's envious, crazy, or offensive" etc., etc. While I cannot honestly deny these claims, I think, however, that the testimonials in this and the previous two chapters, plus the anecdotal material sprinkled throughout this book proves my case--that the society has serious problems in dynamics. The path to healing is to face the situation. Coming clean would be cathartic. There must be admission, regret, and rectification.

Chapter Thirteen - ISKCON, When it is Wrong . . .

You must not neglect your conscience. Otherwise you have no faith in your own cause. There may be disturbances but we should not leave the preaching of Mahāprabhu, despite all difference. Disturbances must come, and we must undergo them. Still, we must remain sincere; we must face the difficulty in a proper way. It has come to train us to go in the right direction. (Sridhara Maharaja)

Difficulties, whether coming on an individual or institutional scale, train us to go in the right direction. In either case, we must not neglect our conscience. The guru is the external manifestation of God and conscience is His internal manifestation, *caitya-guru*. Alienation means to deny *caitya-guru*. Self-realization and simultaneous denial of our conscience, therefore, is a sham.

If, in the final analysis, ISKCON simply will not see difficulties as opportunities, these words of Maharaja's are consoling to any devotee determined to serve the *parampara* despite all obstacles. If association is the problem, simply seek like-minded association and get on with the mission of human life--doing welfare work for others. Don't buy into the illusion that ISKCON has a monopoly on bhakti. *Prema* flows through the *parampara*. ISKCON is meant to be a facility to help us achieve *prema*. As an alienated bureaucracy, however, it is disempowered to fulfill its purpose--unless it shakes off the alienation and goes in the right direction.

The decision to seek association free of the crazy-making dynamics in ISKCON should come only after we have done all in our power to set ISKCON right. This is our duty to Srila Prabhupada. This we may even attempt from outside ISKCON's hierarchy. Reform usually comes from outside the system anyway. But if ISKCON's leaders will not heed even the voice of an angel, what to speak of us, we must not stray from the path of Mahāprabhu. We must preach. Our service to the *parampara* must go on. Free from doubt and delusion, we must perform welfare activities--teach people to distinguish between reality and illusion.

The purpose in this chapter is to further chronicle some of the dysfunctional dealings by presenting excerpts of documents that once addressed the very same kind of problems this book is all about; then towards the end is a discussion on how to orient ourselves in light of the situation.

The first item is a letter from Subhananda dasa to one of our original eleven "*acaryas*." Incidentally, but not surprisingly, it was to the same one who admitted in a moment of candor ten years later that he did things that he should feel guilty for, but felt not a thing, indicating that he is as alienated from himself now as he was then:

21 January, 1985
Dear "A" Swami.

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to our eternal master, guide and well wisher Srila Prabhupada.

I am usually not one to enter political frays, waving banners and storming barricades, but I am so shocked and sickened by your recent blood-cry against "B" Swami's, sent in the form of a letter and "report" to ISKCON leaders, that I feel compelled to articulate my personal reaction... You've come to warn us all---decent citizens of the kingdom---of the doom to come, of traitors in our midst, of conspirators, blasphemers, poisoners, murderers, honey tongued

snakes, and demons. We are informed that the Devil has now incarnate as His Holiness "B" Swami, and that he is to be shunned and disgraced. We must not, you warn, talk with him nor hear what he says, nor let him darken our doorways for even the best of us may fall under his magic spell, bedeviled by his sweet and confounding lies.

In my fifteen years in ISKCON, I've never heard such dangerous nonsense. Devotees throughout the world who know "B" Swami have the utmost respect for him and will not be stampeded into unthinking condemnation of him, as you seem to insist. I am no controversy monger, and might not even have had a great curiosity to hear from "B" if not for your hysterical anathema's ("The lady doth protest too much!")

Myself and others recently met your "devil" and spoke with him a considerable length and found him to be not at all worthy of your fervid denunciations. One need not be a highly gifted discerner of spirits to see that "B" Swami is a sincere and benign Vaisnava of high moral character, a devoted disciple of Srila Prabhupada, a loyal supporter of ISKCON and its institutions, and one of our most expert and successful preachers. He is not "international political revolutionary" or sinister conspirator as you claim. Rather, he is a self-effacing, disarmingly humble devotee who, even in the face of the absurd torment you all are subjecting him to, seems disinclined personally to seek a vendetta.

I have read your version of the events and heard "B" Swami's. Employing my very best instincts for discerning sincerity and honesty, I have to say that I find myself more inclined to believe him than yourself. There is such a tone of frivolous and malicious exaggeration (and who knows how much sheer inventiveness) in your report that you yourself cast doubt on your whole case.

This man's only crime seems to be his willingness, after much suffering and silence, to seek rectification for what he sincerely views (I think quite reasonably) as fundamental violations of sacred principles of Krsna consciousness and of human decency.

Whatever the facts of the case, it is clear that you are subjecting "B" Swami to a horrendous campaign of persecution and defamation which is almost impossible to conceive occurring within a society of devotees. He and "C" Prabhu present what appear to be fairly compelling documented evidence of considerable wrongdoing on the part of the leadership in your zone (including some rather irregular behavior on the part of "D" Swami).

To the extent that the movement, especially its leadership, sells its principles short, to the extent that decisions are made on a passionate, expedient, self-serving basis, to the extent that devotees are dealt with inhumanely, to the extent that power and control are exercised through threat, deceit, intimidation, witch hunts and Gestapo tactics---to that extent it is difficult to represent ISKCON with a clear conscience and with enthusiasm. I cannot be a glorified P.R. cover-up man. Whatever I speak or write about the movement is taken seriously in academic circles only to the extent that I am perceived not as a

apologist, but as an objective and honest interpreter of it. Please do not make my task an impossible one...

This excerpt is from a letter by Ravindra Svarupa dasa to the same "acarya:"

It is with great regret that I have read your 1/4/85 letter (and the accompanying report) to "all authorities in ISKCON" regarding "B" swami, and I want to register my strongest objections to your procedure for dealing with this issue. You should realize how much you have damaged yourselves by your own actions.

I am not, of course, in a position to adjudicate the disputes that have erupted in your zone. That is a matter for the GBC. Yet you have advanced an aggressive and widespread propaganda campaign in (geographical area) against "B" Swami and "C" Prabhu thus making the issue a public one. In (city) alone, "C" Prabhu was subjected to two lengthy telephone harangues by "D" Swami with a follow-up from "E" Swami. And now this letter and report. In forcing this issue into the public arena, you have proceeded with such passionate unrestrained vehemence and produced such awesome display of overkill, that many of us became very inquisitive to hear the other side. I went out of my way to do so, and I am at least quite satisfied that there are two sides to this case.

In your letter and report you prosecute, judge, and sentence "B" Swami before all ISKCON and at the same time try to frighten and bully us into not hearing him. Any honest devotee will respond to this cheating by wanting to hear "B's" side of the case.

All intelligent devotees will recognize the perverted logic by which you try to establish your assertion that "B" Swami is part of a demonic plot against ISKCON. The obvious evidence of his loyalty--that he has not left ISKCON like others but is keeping the association of ISKCON devotees---is, you say, only proof of how devious his plot is. I suppose the fact that he is putting his case to the GBC through due process and submitting himself to its authority only show how even more insidiously devious he is! In other words, your assertion that he is part of a demonic plot is wholly metaphysical, for no possible experience of his loyalty--that he has not left ISKCON, like others, but is keeping the association of ISKCON devotees---is, you say, only proof of how devious his plot is. The only thing you would accept as proof of his innocence is his confession of guilt. Interestingly enough, this is the same tack taken by the Puritan divines in the Salem witchcraft trials, by Sen. Joseph McCarthy in his communist witch-hunt, and by Joseph Stalin in the Moscow purge trials. However none of these people should be accepted as models of Vaisnava behavior.

Finally, you proclaim that anyone who "supports" "B" Swami is "falling under the spell of psychological intimidation." Since the letter we have just read is a masterpiece of psychological intimidation, we are lead to wonder whether this whole demon hunt is an egregious instance of the unfortunate practice of scapegoating, i.e., projecting one's own sins onto others and then 'purifying'

one's self by destroying the others. . . . It is especially unfortunate that a devotee of Srila "F" Swami's stature (GBC Guru) has signed his name to this letter and endorsed the enclosed report. One can only hope that he has been the victim of very bad advice.

Subhananda has since left the society and Rabindra Svarupa became a GBC/guru. Just to show how things change when one gets a title, ten years later, when another ISKCON member of even lesser standing than the "*acarya*" under discussion wrote a letter to the GBC, accusing two members in the society of being "Prabhupada killers"--for which every line of Rabindra's letter would have been an apt reply--there was silence from him. Indeed, at that time he was not interested in hearing both sides. The former protector of basic human rights, and objector to Stalinesque techniques as models of Vaisnava behavior had absolutely nothing to say. A letter of overt psychological intimidation and scapegoating did not arouse any righteous fit from him. Why? Because alienation had fully taken place by this time. The details of that episode shall be presented before the court of public opinion in a future publication.

Returning now to the subject of "B" Swami, here was his account of incidents leading up to his case being made a global issue in the society back in 1985:

6th January 1985
Respected Privilege Committee
Dear GBC Godbrothers!

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet all glories to Srila Prabhupada.

As you are probably all aware already, during the last month we (myself and about 30 other devotees, mostly disciples of "A" Swami) have been thrown out of his zone, our temple has been raided by this men, practically all of our things have been confiscated while the devotees have been threatened several times both physically and spiritually. As another criminal act, they broke into our boutique and preaching center (which is owned by one of us privately) stole all the items for sale etc. All this has happened in my absence as a surprise attack and only after this did I hear from others in other zones that I am accused with being a leading figure in a world conspiracy that is meant to destroy the whole ISKCON society and that I destroyed the faith in the disciples of "A" Swami etc. These accusations were unheard before. Since this tragic happening I tried to contact Srila "A" Swami several times but everyone refuses to talk with me or with the rest of us. I wrote two letters to "A" Swami but no reply came. Up till the present day I have not heard from them anything so I do not know why we were and are treated like this. As at this point I do not have any other choice, I would like to turn to the Privilege Committee for help. The situation right now is very tense. A big campaign is launched against us with the aim of forbidding us to enter any other ISKCON temple or that we present our case to other devotees. Around 30 devotees have been forced by the violent actions of "A" Swami and his men to seriously doubt his spiritual leadership.

The story of the raid: On Christmas day I called our boutique and preaching center. Somebody picked up the phone but did not reply. From the back the

sounds of smashing things and tearing things down came. I thought it must be the wrong number. I called again. The 5th time finally somebody answered, but didn't speak. finally, "D" Swami replied: "This is "D" Swami. We broke into your place, got all of your documents and finished off your empire. This is a war and your will be killed." I was so perplexed that the only thing I could utter was "thank you" and hung up. The worst is that some senior devotees heard the phone conversation and immediately their faith in the leaders of our zone was greatly shaken. They told me they cannot accept such an unjust and criminal act. I tried to calm them down and told them that the only thing they should do in this regard is to pray to Krsna so that everything will be corrected. But they should not give up the guru (that's what they wanted to do upon hearing what has happened). They said that only because of our faith in your words that we accepted "A" Swami as our guru. If he rejects you and acts so strange then we will follow you instead...I went to the apartment of a householder couple (disciples of "A" Swami) and there I found all the devotees of our temple. Some were crying, some were devastated and hopeless while others just stared at the walls. They have been all greatly shaken by the (for them unexplainable) behavior of "A" Swami especially that he forced them to accept something which is not the truth and when he saw that they hesitated, he immediately kicked them out into the street...

They never told me why they did this against me. There are of course some accusations but let me point out that they were never heard before, no one told me anything and all this came up only after this chain of violent actions...
Sincerely "B" Swami.

In presenting these documents I am not taking the side of either party. The aim is simply to show the irrationality and the uncivilized way in which we mete out what we call justice, even if it cost the preaching mission the loss of 30 souls. Due process may have avoided that, but we shall never find out. We prefer passionate frenzy to any other approach in dealing with problems. Again and again we substitute passionate intensity for real devotion to Srila Prabhupada. The singular reason for this is that we have our attachment to a particular outcome and fear that a rational approach will not come out in our favor. We fear, in other words, that the truth will come to light. This is easy to discern, because where there is concern for the truth there cannot be an irrational approach to problem-solving.

Dear reader, this is the society for which we are asked to make all sorts of sacrifices to show our love for Srila Prabhupada.

In this connection, Erich Fromm has made an enlightened observation about our capacity to disguise our irrational strivings (*anarthas*) as a virtue, even to ourselves. I have taken the liberty of rewording so it applies in an ISKCON context:

1. I'm serving my personal ambition, but it is taken for selfless dedication.
2. I do things out of attachment, but it is taken as benevolence or compassion.
3. I have dulled my analytical faculties, but that is taken as quiescence of my mind.
4. I take my subtle illusions as glimpses of Reality.
5. I take a mere glimpse of reality as complete realization.
6. I profess to be a devotee, but I am not a devotee at all, for I do not have the heart of a Vaisnava, and I am adamantly resistant to a change in heart.
7. I am a prisoner of my irrational passions, but I am thought a liberated soul, a master.
8. My self-interested actions may be taken as self-sacrificing.
9. Deceptive methods (or fear) may be rationalized as prudence.

10. Imposters may be taken as sages.

11. I take my material emotions as transcendental.

The last item is becoming a serious problem in our society. We see it by the rise to prominence of devotees who preach with charisma more than with logic and reason. We want to be warm and fuzzy more than live in the truth, so some market warmth and fuzziness. This makes us duller than dishwater, but that we think is quiescence of the mind. We think giving up our analytical faculties make us *sthita prajna*. Such people talk about "the heart over the head." In reality they don't know the meaning of either in the context of *bhakti-yoga*.

This next excerpt is from the same 1994 paper to the GBC from Somak Maharaja which was quoted briefly in the previous chapter. Here he addresses the problem of our less than ideal managerial dynamics:

Is the GBC going to recognize that in the letter that Pradyumna Prabhu wrote to Satsvarupa Maharaja in 1978 he pointed out all the defects that in 1987 due to so many fall downs they had to admit? Are the GBC men going to approach Paramadwaiti Maharaja to recognize that all the defects that he was presenting in his letter of 1984 were forcibly accepted in 1987? Vaisnavas do not get stature by bureaucracy and diplomacy, Vaisnavas get stature based on humility, simplicity, meekness, detachment and so many other godly qualities.

The reform of our movement has not begun yet. In 1987 due to the pressure exerted, some mistakes were admitted, but not publicly and things weren't very widely presented, just some new GBCs were made, and some new gurus and that's all. There was no real change of heart. For example in 1987 the zonal acarya thing was recognized to be a mistake. So actually there was no real reform, only a show bottle reform; get some of the dissatisfied and opposing men into the group and that's all. Real reform will appear when a preacher that is working hard in a place to get the movement established and to make devotees and spread Krsna consciousness will be recognized as the GBC for that area, not that there are GBC with enormous zone that they can't control and somebody else is doing all the hard work. Please do not take this as an offense, just try to see that our movement is becoming stagnant due to so much centralization and 'power-trips.'

I don't know what became of Somak Maharaja's attempt to bring an element of soberness to our leaders, but by knowing the modes of nature, one can make a safe guess. In our society, these and other revelations in this book are sure to rankle, because we have an aversion for discussing issues in a matter-of-fact way with those who are not rubber-stamped as leaders. The non-rubber-stamped are supposed to feel disempowered, like a little child talking with a know-it-all Dad. Prabhupada never coerced us in this way.

Thus these matters need to be aired and discussed openly. That is one of the important safeguards against the group organism becoming alienated. We cannot sentimentally allow "Vaisnava etiquette" to get in the way of our legitimate concerns, realizations, and most of all, the truth.

Actually, when we speak of prudence and etiquette, and say things like "Don't use names. Don't be personal. There is no precedent" etc., more often than not we are rationalizing fear, because if we are discussing facts, where is the justification for such resistance? We tend to use the philosophy to rationalize fear (and personal ambition) in more ways than we think. And our favorite gambit is to project our fear unto others. When we don't want to face facts that pertain to persons we have rubber-stamped as beyond scrutiny, we project it unto those

who are not playing along, "Too harsh. Envious. He is out to get so and so," and "It shouldn't be in *this* way, but in *that* way." We have a million reasons why it is wrong, but most of the time the real reason is fear.

It is easy to perceive this, because all Vaisnavas consider content over form. So when one is straightforward yet people attack the form and have nothing substantial to say against the content, this reveals far more about the person speaking than the actual issue they raise. They are either duplicitous or fearful. The duplicitous should be avoided at all costs. That is the verdict of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. As for the fearful, one need not be afraid of them.

A preacher must learn to recognize the disguises in which we hide fear. Fanaticism is a rationalization for fear, by compensating, projecting a righteous fidelity. The giveaway is that the fanatic is irrational and insists on being irrational. A person who wraps himself in Prabhupada's name, for example, and will not reason, is a person who is controlled by fear and also determined to manipulate others. An emotional wall can serve this purpose very well. But only to the undiscerning.

Fanaticism as a disguise is easy to see through. Most of the time, however, prudence, being mellow, being busy, misuse of concepts such as Covey's "sphere of influence versus sphere of concern," and lacking a moral compass are all rationalizations for fear. Even humility can be a rationalization for fear. Indeed it often is, when it is not disguising pride. The techniques of rationalization are endless.

Those riddled with fear try to infect those with less fear than they. Why? Because if they encourage the courageous, they have to exhibit courage themselves. But alas, they find fear easier to indulge. So they rationalize, "Well, I know the society has problems, but I don't think this is the most effective way to deal with them." Rarely, however, is this speaker proactive in doing anything practical to address problems.

And even if something is being done we have to see what and why and how, and what will be the result. "Most effective way" to many, means waiting for divine intervention, which is immature philosophy; again, often rationalized as advanced, surrendered.

For others, "most effective" means keeping the leaders and sheep dynamic--i.e. the solution must perforce include keeping the status quo. Actually, this motive--fear of losing face, losing position, losing disciples, losing security, and so on--is the root of most of our problems.

Meanwhile, Krsna says, *abhayaṁ sattva-saṁsuddhiḥ*, fearlessness is intrinsic to purification of one's existence. To make significant headway in spiritual life one should associate with those who encourage us to transcend fear. This is achieved by listening to our conscience and living by it. These topics--the psychology of courage, honesty, conscience, etc.--will be explored in future volumes of *Our Mission*.

As far as the revelations being upsetting: That's good. The persons responsible for causing or allowing such things to go on should be upset, but not with the persons bringing it out in the open. That only adds to the problem, for keeping the mantle of secrecy is the surest way to prolong politics, corruption, and bad dynamics. Bringing things out in the open increase our chances of containing such folly. Otherwise, our society is virtually a petrie dish for culturing dysfunctionality, irrationality.

Example: As I write this, a senior *sannyasi* has just left Vrndavana, where he lost his shoes. He decided to make a tempest in a teaspoon to the GBC about it, though there must be better things to do with Krsna's time. The thing is that his shoes were not the issue. He was using that to justify his fit of righteous indignation so he could manipulate the GBC to do what he really wants: Oust from the community all who disagree with him on a point of the philosophy. This he wants to do by wrapping himself in Prabhupada's name. After all, that ploy has served him and others well in the past.

So he tried to whip up a frenzy on e-mail "to get Vrndavana cleaned up." All "for Prabhupada," of course. Whoever has an opinion different than him is "against Prabhupada." Such an easy way to define a follower of Srila Prabhupada, who said *mahatma* means "broad-

mind." But who knows what he really meant, right? Everyone knows that being broad-minded is an especially esoteric and paradoxical concept in our philosophy. Broad-minded really means that if I can only count to fifty, all who can count beyond--nay, all even interested in counting beyond fifty--should be eliminated, because I claim the corner on spiritual realization. Heaven forbid that broad-minded might mean tolerant, able to openly discuss differences of opinion in a civilized and rational way, based on logic, reason, and *sastra*. And perhaps even agree to disagree.

And the most amusing thing is that this *sannyasi* was the teacher of a course on straight and crooked thinking. But has anyone noted the irony of that? Naturally, one wonders which kind of thinking he favors?

People who use the philosophy to justify dominating others find the idea that the Absolute Truth can embrace many variegated angles of vision, uninteresting. Bleak. They see differences as nothing to celebrate--but to eliminate. For them, simplicity means that black and white is how it should be. Why have shades of grey? Variety simply confuses the issue--for them. So this *sannyasi* was saying on the *vyasasana* words to this effect, "Whoever does not agree with Prabhupada, he can just leave. Find some other home." Impressive, until one realizes that what he means is whoever does not agree *with him* can leave. All this passionate intensity, however, is really to hide fear, insecurity, a lack of faith.

He is projecting unflinching faith in Srila Prabhupada to hide a lack of faith in him. This is always the deeper meaning of fanaticism. The same applies for the speaker featured in Chapter Fifteen. Therefore Lord Caitanya taught us that the advanced Vaisnava's symptoms are that he preaches with logic and reason, based on *sastra*; his faith is not blind or irrational (*Cc. Mad. 22.65*). Passionate intensity is irrational.

One who knows history simply cannot help wondering, seeing this kind of dogmatic mentality in our society, whether there'll be an inquisition in Prabhupada's name some day. After all, history repeats itself. If one doubts the possibility, consider again the above letters by Subhananda and Rabindra Svarupa prabhus, and the one by the unnamed Swami, detailing what happened at his preaching center. The incident they are discussing happened in a zone run by a godbrother that the entire society holds in high esteem. And we are supposed to be men of wisdom, the most discriminating people on the planet!

If the evidence does not convince you, dear reader, that we have serious problems, the gravity of which this book only begins to hint at, read *carefully* the "Knock 'em Dead Lecture."

Our philosophy glorifies the intelligent class as the head of the social body. This is a wonderful blueprint for social organization, and coming from the Supreme Lord Himself (*catur varnyam maya srstam*), it is foolproof. Unfortunately, less intelligent men, lacking the propensity for being the head of the social body, but coveting that designation out of false ego, try to fake being intelligent.

In our society, since our leaders favor corporate culture, instead of insightful, wisdom-guided *varnasrama* culture, ambitious non-intellectual types rise up the hierarchical structure. They think their rise certification of their spiritual advancement, when all it certifies is the Peter Principle--that in corporate culture everyone inevitably rises to the level of their incompetence.

This is not so easy in real *varnasrama* society, because one "rises" to the level of one's strengths and stays there and serves. The social body becomes strong physically, psychologically, and intellectually. The body is healthy, like an individual with no neuroses. Besides the victims of the Peter Principle thinking their rise certification of spiritual progress, others, also less intelligent or uneducated, but not as ambitious, and generally the mass of the social system, also think the risers spiritually advanced. These pseudo intellectual risers capture positions of power in the society and exert their incompetent influence on the whole society. Irrationality naturally prevails.

After capturing power, one of the functions high on the pseudo intellectuals' list of priorities is to eliminate--because they are the biggest threat to their existence--all the real intellectuals within sight.

This phenomenon, endemic to mass movements, was shown by social philosopher Eric Hoffer in his masterpiece *The Ordeal of Change*. Stalin, he explained, teamed up with intellectuals--Lenin and Trotsky--to overthrow White terror. When Lenin died untimely, Stalin came into power and imposed Red Terror. One of his first acts was to purge all the intellectuals in the emerging Soviet Union. Trotsky, being a real intellectual, had no inclination to accept political power, but seeing that under Stalin the revolution had brought on a new brand of terror, he exiled himself to Mexico. Guilt drives us, if we lack the heart of a Vaisnava, to enact even more grievous hatred on those we have wronged. In Stalin's case, Trotsky alive was like a conscience for him. It gave him no solace that his old compatriot was a world away in Mexico; he had Trotsky assassinated with a pickaxe.

Dear reader, keeping in mind that there are a range of ways to cloak envy and hatred besides assassination, are we above similar conduct or motivation? No doubt, we'd all like to think so, but let us be realists. Look at the trend in our society towards conscienceless alienation and restrictive "laws" instead of more concerted efforts to improve the quality of life for the ordinary devotee. Look at the history, as shown in this chapter. Look at the material in the previous two chapters and the next two. Look at the rhetoric in the "Knock 'em Dead" chapter, which echoes the aforementioned class by a *sannyasi* who lost his shoes. Most of all, look beyond the mask of affability of those we are trained to revere through the rubber-stamping process of the hierarchy, look behind the masks, at their character. It does not paint a pretty picture.

If you are afraid to look, may I remind you that we cannot get out of illusion unless we face reality squarely and utterly.

Throughout history, the psuedo intellectuals, or in our case, the gruesome envious and jealous mundane men in the dress of Vaisnavas, never fail to leave havoc in their wake. One who does not have the heart of a Vaisnava--a conscience, in other words--cannot handle power. Zimbardo's experiment shows that it is possible to lose our conscience in just two days.

The oldest problem in human society is that those with authority don't want anyone who can count higher than them around, unless those people serve the authority's agenda. This is so clear in the exchange of letters between Srila Prabhupada and certain godbrothers that he approached for *sannyasa*. Powerbrokers in the dress of Vaisnavas don't try to see what Krsna wants; rather they assume that what they want is what Krsna wants, and they try to train everyone else to think like that.

Thus if they can count only up to ten, they want a society of ten-counters. Basically, when *sudras* are prominent they want the worker to run the show, because they want ten-counters like themselves around them. When *vaisyas* are prominent, we get capitalism, wherein one can count dollar bills, but intellectually, perhaps up to twenty. When the *ksatriya* mentality, or monarchy is prominent, high counting is great as long as it serves the agenda of the person or persons at the top; otherwise "Off with his head." In this way, whoever has power wants to limit the range of reason for all others.

This poses a problem for *brahmanas* and Vaisnavas, because they can count almost without limit. It is their nature; and they want to give others that chance. Genuine intellectuals use knowledge not to enslave, but to liberate. They want to see everybody learn to count as high as possible. And the Lord wants this too; therefore He mandated *varnasrama* culture, so everyone can simultaneously count up to their limit, as *sudras*, *vaisyas*, or *ksatriyas*; at the same time the *brahmanas* and Vaisnavas can influence them to count higher. It makes for a healthy, alive, dynamic social organism.

In Kali-yuga, however, people lack faith in Krsna's scheme for social engineering and everything becomes topsy-turvy. Thus we find that the examples in Chapters Ten through

Fifteen support the findings of Zimbardo's prison experiment in that authority--even when conferred on one's godbrothers in spiritual life, in the culture that espouses simple living and high thinking--can still result in calloused, dehumanizing dynamics and utter bone-jarring foolishness.

As the popular song goes, "There's something really wrong with you (ISKCON) and me. . . Or that's just the way it is." But would Prabhupada accept such a fatalistic approach? Does he want us to throw up our hands? That is not possible. He wants us to have this attitude: *When ISKCON is right, keep it right. When it is wrong, put it right.*

Another dictum that would please him: *I will not deceive, but I also will not be deceived.*

Yet another: *"I will not accept irrationality enacted on me and I will not enact irrationality on anyone."*

Taking the last few chapters into consideration, this is the question for the reader: "What can I do to make ISKCON the way it should be?" If the question is sincere, Krsna will surely guide you rightly from within. Meanwhile the above dicta are good places to start.

Chapter Fourteen - "He Cannot Make Any Comment. These are facts"

When I asked "B" prabhu about Kundali prabhu's books, he told me in a way absolutely not open for discussion that his books were "very offensive;" that there were no precedents in the society of Vaisnavas that anybody had written to bring out somebody's dirty laundry; that although he does not mention them directly, everyone knows whom Kundali is whipping; that this is not the Vaisnava way to clarify or correct faults; that the fact that in the past countless essays, documents, etc., were written to denounce the mistakes of leaders, it did not contribute the least so that they would change; that the circumstances that the majority of ISKCON's leaders have received with repulsion Kundali's books is in itself a proof that Kundali's so-called contribution is not desirable or beneficial; that in any case, Kundali does not have the required qualification to appoint himself as the detractor of the Vaisnavas since he himself admits to have transgressed the regulative principles even less than five years ago; that to earn the mercy of the Vaisnavas, first one has to serve their lotus feet. Lastly, "B" prabhu frankly acknowledged that he has not read any of Kundali's books, only brief passages referred to him by third parties.

Whether this event actually happened or not is not important, for it is not important who said it. The above passage is the *ad hominem* fallacy, in which one attacks the person rather than responding to the issues raised. It is a typical response by higher-ups in our society, yet it passes the judgment of most devotees because they are trained to blindly accept authority, even if irrational, and this particular barrage is a motherlode of irrationality.

For the sake of teaching the untrained reader how to nimbly deal with the *ad hominem* fallacy, we shall walk through these items one at a time and see if they add up or not.

My aim is not to defend myself, for I have nothing to defend. I am practicing to live my life in the open and whoever wants to denigrate me is most welcome to have a go. I know full well

that my true condition is far worse than anyone is capable of describing. At best their attempts can only point me along the path of progress. In that sense, I'm extremely grateful to all who criticize me and would like them not to desist. They are my best well-wishers. As Emerson said, "We all need someone who will make us do what we can." When Kṛṣṇa is particularly merciful on a fallen soul he will send that soul many such persons as guides; however, that does not mean such a soul should neglect to distinguish between truth and illusion.

Consequently, in keeping with my resolve to inspire heightened discrimination among the followers of Śrīla Prabhupada, to stimulate analytical thinking so we can learn to *see* for ourselves, I offer these ways of responding to the statements above, with deepest apologies to the prabhu responsible:

When I asked "B" prabhu about Kundali prabhu's books, he told me in a way absolutely not open for discussion that his books were "very offensive." Overlooking the fact that the speaker had not read the books in question, let's give him the benefit of the doubt and say that he had read them carefully. Still, his assumption reveals the typical authoritarian disposition--that the questioner must accept the leaders' view over all other views, including the questioner's, who has read the books. Devotees must learn to recognize the manipulative and disempowering dynamic of "thinging" another human being. Treating another like a "thing" makes the perpetrator a thing.

Consider this passage from *Psychology and Religion* by Andrew Fuller:

In authoritarian ethics, some agency "above" the human being lays down the rules of conduct. An irrational power presides over people in such ethics, some "power over." No criticism of this "superior" agency is permitted. . . . "Power over" implies the inequality of some "under," someone who is subjugated. Authoritarian ethics denies that people are able to discover for themselves what is good or bad. The authority alone, rather, determines good and evil. . . .the authority takes this power upon itself in its own interests, rather than in the interests of the people being dictated to. The authority exploits the people. This it accomplishes by excluding the use of reason (conscience), invoking awe, and inducing submissiveness. "That's the way it is, we are in a position to know, it's for your own good, trust us" they say in their way. The main sin in this sort of ethics is rebellion.

Kundali's books are sinful from the viewpoint of this "ethic." The speaker has not read them, and has no idea whether or not they cling meticulously to the *parampara*, but that is a small matter to the speaker. By the end of this discussion we shall see that all symptoms mentioned here are being practiced by this GBC man. The verdict of such evidence leads to one conclusion: We are dealing with an alienated man. He thinks everyone is a *thin* g, including himself; and by accepting him as authority, one becomes a *thing*.

A person is not a thing. Our devotees must learn to recognize this pernicious non-Vaisnava symptom of being "thinged" when our "authorities" assume that their role is to define reality for us, with no room for discussion. The *sastra* says that the *kanistha* devotee worships the Supreme Lord, but he does not know how to treat devotees. In fact the verse says that the *kanistha* devotee does not even know how to deal with "the people in general." It means, among other considerations, that it is offensive to treat people like things, as the authoritarian stance of the speaker is doing.

Then to declare the books "very offensive" with no substantiation is a further dogmatic symptom. In no group of civilized persons can one make accusations and not give supporting evidence yet have one's case stick. This is possible only in totalitarian systems. In our society this unfortunate symptom comes with the mantle of many godbrothers becoming initiating

gurus by institutional fiat, which was noted in the letter of Jayadvaita Swami cited in the chapter "Casualty Report." Many godbrothers get this blight of going absolute, because the service of guru becomes an *upadhi*, whereas the real qualification to be guru is *sarvopadhi vinirmuktam*, giving up *upadhis*. Failure to do so means dysfunctional or irrational conduct as blatantly shown here, which is so off-putting to intelligent human beings and a disservice to the *parampara*.

That there were no precedents in the society of Vaisnavas that anybody had written to bring out somebody's dirty laundry. Here we have another example of the species of irrational thinking that passes as sound philosophy in our community. If there is no precedent for something, does not prevent someone from doing something for the first time? Where is the precedent for *Jaiva Dharma*? The devotees have fallen again and again for the sort of illogic used here to disempower them from coming to their own conclusions about people and events in our society, from becoming hard-headed realists.

The issue here is not one of precedent. The issue is this: if truth and illusion are blended together and adversely affecting the whole community of Vaisnavas, and if the problem is rooted in the leaders, and if the leaders are blocked to communication, what is the person determined to live with a clear conscience to do but take the case to the court of public opinion? That could have been avoided by the leaders heeding Kundali's numerous requests to hear his concerns and acknowledge his willingness to work through the system--in short, if his godbrothers would have had the decency to treat him as a grown man and not as a child. The psychology behind this thinking--demanding submission to irrational authority--is explained in the next chapter and in the final chapter.

Kundali not only met with consistent refusal, but the "authorities" tried to bully him into submission by various political gambits, one of which was a threat to drop him down a shaft. All this was preferred to talking with him person to person. In the process they revealed how seriously alienated they have become. They compounded an already existing problem: that Kundali was already having trouble representing the society to the public with a clear conscience. Swindle in the name of the *parampara* is a disservice.

All these events are simply unacceptable to him in an institution that he has given more than half his life to serve, the institution of his spiritual master, which is mandated to create a model for the world of a community of people of ideal character. (All the details of his exchanges with the various leaders and *sannyasis* that tried preferred to use brute force and duplicity over straightforward dealings will be put before the court of public opinion (and posterity) in another book entitled, *For the Record: A Memoir*. Even organizations run by out and out materialistic men, whom we ritually criticize in our daily classes, are capable of being genuinely concerned when a veteran member is concerned about the group, but not us.

Under the circumstances, it is a matter of duty to go public with the issues so the world gets to know what goes on behind the pious front of ISKCON? Silence would be immoral. A swindle. If going public does not serve as a conscience for the leaders then there is no hope whatsoever, because how can one repose hope in persons that are devoid of feeling shame, guilt, think nothing of thinging people?

Having been trained by Srila Prabhupada on the principle that one fights for the sake of fighting, without considering one's happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat, and by so doing one incurs no sin, and realizing that therein lies true happiness, Kundali is fully prepared to do what it takes to get his message through--up to and including dragging ISKCON through the courts in the USA so the leaders will get both feet back on the ground. Kundali believes that the present book illustrates how powerful a case he is capable of making.

The book also lets the innocent members of ISKCON know what really goes on in the society so that they can make some decisions as to whether they want to remain in such a

dysfunctional organization in God's name, or stand up and assert their right to have a say in the group organism of which they are a part, or search for better association.

We are meant to distinguish reality from illusion for the benefit of all, as mandated in our scriptures, and the preacher is supposed to find the ways and means to communicate that. If our emperors think it reveals greater integrity on their part to punish the one who points out their failure to have clean underwear, does that increase their stature? Therefore, those who have dirty laundry should get it cleaned. This would inspire everyone concerned.

Unfortunately, as is typical of those caught in the grip of their irrational strivings (*rajo-guna*), this speaker assures us that no such inspiration is forthcoming, for the leaders will not change. Before we leave the subject of dirty laundry, presumably the speaker is not aware that one of our new breed of university-student-gurus is writing a paper on the history of philosophical heresies in the Hare Krsna movement. He says he wants to show scholars that "we are capable of taking a self-examining look at our institution." One guesses that "show" is the operative word here. Why bother with a paper on dead issues for "show" when we've got live issues that need attention? If he is really sincere to show our capacity for self-examining literature, he should distribute Kundali's books. It would not glorify him, but it would be real service to the cause.

If we gave an award for philosophical deviations this person would be the hands down winner for he is single-handedly responsible for more philosophical deviations than all others put together since 1966, and happens to be the same person who promised to foist on us more nastiness, politics, etc., for another 25 years in a letter to the GBC. No doubt in his narrative his laundry will be all multi-colored so his dirt doesn't show. Are we supposed to believe his putting our dirty laundry on display on dead issues is going to be a beneficial and desirable contribution?

That although he does not mention them directly, everyone knows whom Kundali is whipping. Kundali is not interested in whipping anybody. His conscience is clear on that account. He is interested in truth separated from illusion. He is interested in representing ISKCON with a clear conscience. This is altogether impossible at the moment with all that he has experienced and understands about dysfunctional or alienated group dynamics. Unfortunately, it is necessary to expose sham. Having labored to sort out reality from illusion, why should he not share it with the innocent who may be duped by the alienating institution into believing a six is a nine or that black is white or that a *kanistha* devotee is a topmost Vaisnava? This our duty in service to the *parampara*, is it not?

Kundali has not a shred of doubt that his spiritual master, given the same circumstances, would have done the same thing. The evidence is there in his pre-ISKCON Vyaspuja offerings to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. How is that for precedent from the pen of our very own Founder-Acarya?

And Prabhupada did not stop with offerings. In his purports he addressed the problems in his spiritual master's institution and we all know who he was talking about. And when Tamala Krsna Gosvami, after stating that Prabhupada criticism "was actually relishable" and "very personal," asked him if Sridhara Maharaja made any comment about said purports, Prabhupada's reply was "He cannot make any comment. These are facts." Since this speaker acknowledges that by the facts, "we know who Kundali is whipping," then what can he say to these facts? Hence, following the speaker's logic Srila Prabhupada is also "very offensive," no?

Indeed, Srila Prabhupada has encouraged Kundali by coming in a dream and putting a lotus foot on his head. Our precedent-setting spiritual master has said that when the guru comes in a dream that should be taken as real. Kundali has faith in the words of the spiritual master. At that time Kundali begged his spiritual master to please confer on him the power to preach pure Krsna consciousness. Kundali has no reason to believe that Prabhupada did not grant his wish, so from that day he considers himself knighted by Srila Prabhupada to take on the

benighted. Why not, isn't it that preaching means to dispell ignorance with the light of knowledge? Where is his fault in that?

And, while Kundali is interested in group healing, in focusing on the sin and not the sinner, it is a fact that if the shoe fits. . . well, . . . it fits. His duty is to teach discrimination so people can get out of illusion. Beyond the voice of his conscience, he does not need the approval of a single ISKCON leader to do this.

The speaker's assumption is that if Kundali first gets the blessings of this speaker or the leaders then he may write books. What about the fact that Kundali has his own relationship with the *parampara* through Srila Prabhupada and that if he has cleared the matter with his conscience he may write as many such books as he likes for his own purification, and sanity? And his readers can get help in sifting the confusing data they daily have to encounter within the mission of his spiritual master. Just see how the authority--in the illusion that he has "power over" his godbrother--wants to assume the role of guru.

If the majority of the leaders object to Kundali's books, their best bet is to stop giving him material. Kundali has no objection to that. There are other books he would love to write if his spiritual master's mission was not in disarray. Until that is addressed it is difficult to turn one's attention elsewhere. For one who is not alienated, the pricking of conscience is impossible to ignore; but the alienated cannot be expected to understand this concept, for our philosophy says that it is impossible to conceive of something outside the realm of our experience.

Plus, in his prayers to Srila Prabhupada, Kundali already knows the nectar and inner satisfaction of presenting himself before his spiritual master in this mood: "Srila Prabhupada, according to my capacity I tried to address problems in your institution. I didn't don blinkers and try to be peaceful yet think myself your disciple." Even if unsuccessful in addressing the problems, the measure of satisfaction from merely trying, knowing that he lived as a man and not as a sheep, cannot be estimated.

That this is not the Vaisnava way to clarify or correct faults. Interesting remark. What is that elusive Vaisnava way to clarify or correct faults? Complicity? Silence? Politics? Graft? Blackmail? Promotion? Cover-up? How about straightforward dealings? Is that against the Vaisnava standard? Kundali tried several times to get a civil dialogue going but met only irrationality and double-dealings. His next step, therefore, is the court of public opinion. If this is not "the way," fine. If the speaker knows the way, why does he not apply it? For that matter, why does he not write or visit Kundali and enlighten him about "the way" and team up with him to rid the society of dysfunctionality.

And, how is it that back in the mid-eighties when papers were circulated to bring about reform, then it was the Vaisnava way? Didn't all readers know whose "dirty laundry" was being discussed at that time? Isn't it interesting that the same absolutist, authoritarian mode of dealings that the disenfranchised godbrothers were protesting shoulder to shoulder at that time is now suddenly the posture of Kundali's old comrade in arms? These letters G-B-C and g-u-r-u have an amazing potency to infect people with grandeur.

That the fact that in the past countless essays, documents, etc., were written to denounce the mistakes of leaders, it did not contribute the least so that they would change. Here is wonderful logic par excellence. Inadvertently he admits that the leaders need to change, but since they did not in the past and apparently will not in the future, as the speaker in the next chapter assures us, Kundali is at fault. Logic dictates that the fact they would not change despite "countless" attempts and of their unhappy godbrothers seems but another issue to address--namely their shameless--reveals a character disorder in the leaders. How does that make Kundali offensive?

A mistake is an inadvertent error, which one detects either by having it pointed out or by following one's own conscience. Then one owns it and tries to rectify it. Then a mistake is a growth experience. This wisdom is acknowledged the world over. Embarrassment at improper action is a symptom of *sattva-guna*. A *crime*, is on two kinds (a) it is premeditated and done

with full knowledge that it is wrong or (b) it was inadvertent, a mistake, but upon being pointed out, if one refuses to own it, to repent, and to rectify, then what was a mistake becomes a crime. The *sastra* says that one tolerates such crimes knowingly is as heinous as the perpetrator of the wrong. So, who is guilty of offense, (a) the one pointing to the naked emperors, (b) the one conspiring to pretend that they are in full regalia, or (c) the ones determined not to heed the countless attempts to get them to change?

Note also that the illustrious GBC speaker never addresses the truth or falsity of the issues raised in Kundali's books, although he tacitly confirms that truth is there. Otherwise he would have made a huge issue of all the lies that Kundali tells, but he doesn't dare make that accusation. The *sastric* standard is that such compositions even if improperly composed are accepted by honest men. Thus all this speaker has accomplished is to show that the majority of our leaders, himself included, are not honest men. However, that is precisely the point made in Kundali's books, so how come the speaker is also not "very offensive"?

That the circumstances that the majority of ISKCON's leaders have received with repulsion Kundali's books is in itself a proof that Kundali's so-called contribution is not desirable or beneficial. Kundali concedes that his contribution is not desirable, but only in certain quarters, namely among those whom the shoe fits. Considering that we have already established that they are not honest men, their repulsion is quite predictable. The big surprise would have been if they had come clean. But dysfunctional leaders only preach *trnad api sunicena*; they don't practice it. Preaching is for them, practice is for Kundali and everyone else. And might makes right, etc., etc., etc.

As mentioned in the Introduction, referring to *Our Mission*, one GBC man, no doubt fearing the repulsion of the majority of the body, said privately that "Every word of Kundali's book is true." Interestingly the truth of the analysis in *Our Mission* has not been challenged here, but isn't it that the truth is the only point that really matters in an assembly of honorable men?

Anyway, those who appreciate Kundali's books--because they enable readers to see through myth, denial, plausible lies, social rationalizations, and outright nonsense--find them quite desirable and beneficial contributions. It just so happens that they number in the hundreds. How, then, can the leaders' repulsion be proof of anything other than what we already know--that they lack integrity and basic human decency, that they bully, coerce, and intimidate those who are not smitten with them, and ultimately are prepared to railroad anyone who dares to challenge their authoritarian claim to Srila Prabhupada's legacy?

The unspoken assumption is that no one is able to decide for himself or herself what is a desirable and beneficial contribution to the society of Vaisnavas without the leaders' okay. Well, that is an illusion Kundali intends to shred in the line of service to the *parampara*. He intends to shred it precisely by writing books that chronicle the course of the irrational and dysfunctional dealings of those claiming to represent the legacy of his spiritual master. Those who know something about the intellectual history of the world have no doubt that "a drop of ink can make a million think."

That in any case, Kundali does not have the required qualification to appoint himself as the detractor of the Vaisnavas since he himself admits to have transgressed the regulative principles even less than five years ago. Note that he does not enlighten us about the mysterious "required qualification" but plunges ahead with what has been the ISKCON standby--the fallacy of the *ad hominem* attack. Actually, it was more than five years ago, but that fact is insignificant. The big point is that Kundali admitted it. He did not try to move the sun and the moon to hide it. And he learned from it. And whether or not he is qualified to discern between truth and illusion is not a matter for the speaker to decide. That's a matter between Kundali, his spiritual master, and his conscience. The speaker's test from Krsna is for him to look beyond the temptation for an *ad hominem* attack and face the facts that Kundali raises.

Sastra says that service rendered sincerely is never lost and if one leaves the path there are no ritual measures for re-admission to it. One simply takes it up again. Moreover, if Kundali fell down only ten seconds ago, it does not follow that his observations are automatically untrue or invalid, that two wrongs make a right. Falldown does not mean one loses his capacity to see through lies, mundane profiteering, and dehumanizing dynamics. It does not mean one can't tell when he is "thinged." Actually, according to Srila Jiva Gosvami, falldown is a growth opportunity. Prabhupada never used falldown of his disciples to handicap or disempower them. Why should Kundali think that he is now?

Yes, Kundali may have fallen in the past, but he believes that irrational or dysfunctional behavior, as on display here, is to be fallen in the present. For a Vaisnava is neither irrational nor authoritarian. If being fallen is a disqualification to be the detractor of anyone, how come this speaker contradicts his own code?

Further, while we may use the regulative principles as a weapon, our *acaryas* have advised us to avoid the *dharmadvaji* more than any other kind of bad association. Kundali would much prefer to associate with a straightforward person honestly struggling to follow the principles, even if failing to do so, than a duplicitious person who follows the four principles scrupulously. Strict following can be a handy disguise for a private agenda. We may have trojan horses for maya in Krsna's camp. The speaker has already admitted that "they'll never change," what he failed to mention is that they'll happily change others.

The speaker's assumption is, "No way Krsna could be using unqualified Kundali to make a point to us qualified souls." Is it that someone is only Krsna's instrument when the leaders decide? The paradigm is clearly self-serving. Here is hands down proof of alienation: The leaders have replaced the Lord. Now He can't do anything they disapprove. If Krsna used an assembly of irrational men to test Kundali, is it not possible that He will also use Kundali, whom despite everything is still His servant, for His schemes? Ahh, but now this is not fair play, Kundali is talking philosophy.

Please note that Kundali does not consider himself the detractor of any Vaisnavas. He is the detractor of ignorance, not Vaisnavas. A Vaisnava's quality is *saralata*, simplicity. If somehow affected by the modes and it is pointed out even by a pariah, he is thankful and counts himself fortunate indeed. That is a Vaisnava. The speaker has already admitted the resistance to change despite countless documents and Kundali's books. To refer to the same persons as Vaisnavas in the next moment calls to question the sober judgment of the speaker. We saw, for instance, in the chapter "Casualty Report," where a former GBC man, Madhudvisa prabhu, now thinks that ISKCON's leaders are "all demons." So we have two opinions--the leaders are Vaisnavas and the leaders are demons. Which is true? Kundali, following his own dictum, that one not accept or reject anything blindly, finds that upon deliberating on the matter, applying the requisite *sastric* guidelines for discerning divine and demonic symptoms, that there is a marked absence of Vaisnava symptoms among a large number of the leaders in ISKCON, thus the verdict is slanted heavily in Madhudvisa's favor. Is it not our duty to Srila Prabhupada to do the needful in such circumstances by pointing them out so we can follow his instruction to "completely neglect" them?

We also saw in the chapter "Further Diagnosis" where a quasi-GBC man declared the present GBC body to be the most mature group we've ever had, himself included. He indicated that whoever disagrees with him is ignorant and insane. One consideration in response to this, is that it is well documented that certain types of psychotics think themselves sane and everyone else insane. Another consideration is that he is right, indeed this is the best we have to offer. Oddly, Kundali finds neither possibility consoling.

"Self-realization means," Prabhupada said, "when you are thinking twenty-four hours, 'I'm the servant of Krsna'." This simple practice is lacking. If ISKCON's leaders actually thought like this for four hours out of every twenty-four we'd be in better shape, so would they. Alas, one who is conscienceless--the alienated or self-estranged man--cannot be self-realized. Every

other loss is noticed except this one. Even loss of one's mind is noticeable, but loss of self It is bewitching to the loser, but that does not mean no one else can read the signs. Kundali had many realizations as a result of his falldown. Probably the most significant one was that his fall down itself was a result of his neglecting to listen to his conscience and write the very sort of books that the speaker is so caustic about. The way to avoid falling again is to enter the fray, the way Arjuna understood after hearing from the Lord what was his duty. Finally, note that Prabhupada's godbrothers also had this lamentable problem of not considering him qualified for anything (except to serve their agenda):

. . . because of envy of my Godbrothers. I was known. Although they knew that Prabhupada (Srila Bhaktisiddhanta) liked me very much, because I am *grhashta*, I was known as *paca-grhashta*. *Paca-grhashta* means a rotten *grhashta*. (Mayapur, 1976)

Did he allow himself to be disempowered by his godbrothers' non-Vaisnava spirit. No. Much to our good fortune. He said they were "Envious and jealous mundane men in the dress of Vaisnavas." He completely neglected them. A faithful disciple is single-minded in service to the master. Others--the rubber-stamped, alienated persons possessed by irrational strivings, who lack the courage to stand up for the truth--may say so many things, but the disciple must know what is service and what is disservice and must listen to the voice of conscience; and then he must do what has to be done.

This is the model Srila Prabhupada gave us and Kundali's head and heart is at the feet of any and all who model their lives after our *acarya's* example. He pines for their mercy and offers this humble suggestion: That the speaker do likewise.

That to earn the mercy of the Vaisnavas, first one has to serve their lotus feet. This Kundali categorically agrees to. He is determined to get the mercy of Srila Prabhupada and the Vaisnavas in *parampara*, and any contemporary Vaisnavas who, by their symptoms, deserve the epithet. He is on call 24 hours a day for such opportunities. Keep in mind, however, another dictum of his: The simple man does not deceive *and he is also not deceived*. Kundali refuses, therefore, to subscribe to the method of creating advanced devotees by rubber-stamp. He reserves the right to ascertain whom he will serve. He suggests that the speaker and his colleagues not assume they have a monopoly on mercy--yet another blunder that some of Prabhupada's godbrothers made.

If, however, the Vaisnavas the speaker has in mind are the persons whom he has assured us earlier will not change their nefarious ways, there are different ways of looking at the matter. One is to consider that except to embrace one and make one as draconian as themselves, what mercy can they give?

Yet, giving the speaker the benefit of the doubt--that these are in fact transparent via media Vaisnavas capable of conferring mercy on those whom they choose--Kundali considers that he already has their mercy in abundance. Upon their last round of irrational dealings with him (Mayapur 1996), and with the committee's ultimatums from on high, without any discussion and due process, even after the GBC body agreed to his proposal that said committee work through his concerns with him, he has removed himself from under their thumb.

Subordination to irrational authorities is the height of folly in spiritual life, incompatible with the concept of being *asammoha*. The practice is contraindicated for one seeking the Absolute Truth, which calls for increasing sanity, not insanity. Kundali's move has served to make him strong and determined to carry on his commitment to the *parampara* without the illusion that his godbrothers in ISKCON's hierarchy will aid in his effort. In this sense, they have been most merciful to him and he is definitely appreciative for being the beneficiary of their grace.

Kundali is grateful and plans to reciprocate their kindness by serving them in this way: Writing book upon book that raises the reader's skill at discerning the varieties of dysfunctional dynamics and thereby pressure the ISKCON leaders to upgrade their performance.

Such books will also serve as historical documents for posterity. As things now stand, the world deserves to know the madness that results from the *non compos mentis* presumption of absolute power rather than the healthy spirit that to lead is to serve, which Srila Prabhupada exemplified. It is fully in the hands of the leaders to decide if these books will be historical and/or hysterical as well.

Kundali may decide to keep up with the current trend of going back to university, but not out of boredom. He reckons that there will be a lucrative future in psychiatry, considering all the unstable persons that ISKCON seems intent on mass producing. An alternative is a career in law. He may decide to cash in on the market for legal counsel for the lawsuits the cult of the GBC is sure to attract as more and more devotees realize they have been swindled.

An option he's definitely considering is going to a publisher like Harper and Row to propose a book deal for his reflections on 23 years of the Hare Krsna movement. That could spin off talk shows and movie deals too. Anything to sober the leaders up. And don't try to tell him that he's out to ruin Prabhupada's movement, unless you first convince him that his books and the four cited in "Casualty Report" do not provide ample proof that the movement is ruined and that the books are all lies, which would be hard to do, considering that the speaker has tacitly confirmed the truth of Kundali's books.

Actually, other than to force one out of their crazy-making association, what greater mercy can the leaders confer? Any greater mercy constitutes a post-dated check, which Prabhupada taught that only a dunce would accept.

Lastly, "B" prabhu frankly acknowledged that he has not read any of Kundali's books, only brief passages referred to him by third parties. This, of course, takes the proverbial cake.

Note the gross absurdity of this, coming from a person who knows well that in the past certain motivated and power-crazed godbrothers in ISKCON closed ranks to manipulate the thinking of others in their bid to ostracize yet other godbrothers from the society. How could he now get manipulated and fall for it so beautifully, unless he also has sub-standard motives?

Here is something to consider from the pen of Marianne Williamson, who has not read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and makes no pretensions to being a Vaisnavi:

Years ago, I was attending a dinner party in New York City. The topic of conversation at the table was a novel that had recently been published. Someone asked me if I had read it. I hadn't, but I had read the book review in the *New York Times*. I lied and said, "Yes." I was so appalled at myself. I hadn't read the book, but I had enough information to pretend, for a moment, that I had. *I was willing to let someone else's opinion stand in for my own.*

This, unfortunately, is standard operational procedure in the dysfunctional atmosphere of ISKCON, particularly at the upper levels, where blindly closing ranks and one-sided justice is par for the course. And we consider ourselves to be models for the world. Perhaps we are, in the sense that we show what the world shouldn't do, but that was not Prabhupada's intention. The same person who supplied the details of this encounter between a devotee and the GBC man gave this footnote:

This is the same man who had a casual conversation with "A" dasa. When "A" dasa mentioned your books, "B" prabhu responded that although you preach ethics you have publicly mistreated and abused "C" Swami in a *Srimad-*

Bhagavatam class in Vrndavana, which "B" prabhu did not attend. Later on "A" dasa came to Vrndavana and heard the same class on tape and finding nothing wrong or impolite on it said to me: "This is the problem. The leaders accuse devotees without knowing them; sanction books without reading them; and give opinions on classes without hearing them.

Ethics? Hmmmm. Kundali sees no need to offer further comment. As Groucho Marx used to say, ethical man that he was, "I'd love to engage in a battle of wits with ya, but I never fight an unarmed man."

Chapter Fifteen - A Knock 'em Dead Lecture

"I've noted. He does not have the heart of a Vaisnava." (Srila Prabhupada)

Considering the gravity of the revelation in this chapter, I want to preface it by briefly discussing the distinction between rational and irrational faith in authority. This quote from Srila Prabhupada's 1976 *Bhagavatam* class advocates rational faith in one's outlook on authority:

Even there is duty we have to see what will be the effect of the duty. Not everything should be done very blindly. This is devotee. Devotee means he's not blind.

Unfortunately, by not making a distinction between rational and irrational faith, we often advocate irrational faith while discussing the principles of submission, surrender, and so forth. One guru was asked "Do I surrender my intelligence or through my intelligence." The guru said, "You surrender your intelligence." Yikes. Meanwhile, Prabhupada states in the purport to the *tad viddhi pranipatena* verse, that blind submission is condemned. Irrational faith, in essence, is belief in a person, idea, or symbol which is not the result of our own processing of our thoughts and feelings, or conscience; *rather it is based on our emotional submission to irrational authority*. We saw a good example of this in the account of my phone conversation with a GBC man in the chapter "A Further Diagnosis," wherein the GBC man was claiming submission to the GBC body, which was acting irrationally at the time. An even better example is from Jagadish prabhu's account of his experience early in the movement:

I was still 20 years old when the temple asked me if I wanted to get married. I said no. He asked me again some days afterward. Again I said no, but asked why he wanted to know. He said there was a girl coming to the temple and she should be married. (This was certainly a speculation--either his or someone

else's--that girls should be married as soon as they wanted to join. I was so naive that I just accepted that this was the proper way to do things in Krsna consciousness.) . . . (Later--after we were already married--I heard that the president had the idea that I was attracted to her, although he never mentioned that to me. He heard something from her friend, who was also joining at that time, that I had talked to her in a friendly way. Hardly a basis for a marriage relationship.)

Emotional submission to irrational authority is not the only way to ruin one's life. Irrational submission to rational authority is also bad news. Therefore Arjuna questioned the Lord when the Lord ordered him to kill Asvatthama. Prabhupada comments that even there is duty, a devotee is not blind. "This is devotee."

Studies show that persons who have given up their inner volition and submitted to an authority tend to substitute the authority's experience for their own. They are alienated persons, but they believe that their conduct is rooted in their own willpower. They believe the voice of "swallowed" authority to be the voice of conscience.

An extreme example of irrational submission to authority is the posthypnotic experience. The subject, even after awakening from trance, will, at the appointed time or signal, find that the suggested feeling of being icy cold comes and he or she then acts accordingly by putting on a coat. Posthypnotic subjects will rationalize their action, *completely convinced that the reason they give for putting on a coat in mid-summer is the true motive for their irrational action.*

There are more commonplace situations where a similar dynamic between submission to authority and our thought processes takes place. In discussing faith as a character trait, Erich Fromm dealt with the idea of "semihypnotic" irrational submission to or faith in a forceful authority:

The reaction of people to a leader equipped with a strong power of suggestion is an example of a semihypnotic situation. Here too the unqualified acceptance of his ideas is not rooted in the listeners' conviction based upon their own thinking or their critical appraisal of the ideas presented to them, but instead in their emotional submission to the speaker. People in this situation have the illusion that they agree, that they rationally approve of the ideas the speaker suggested. They feel they accept him because they agree with his ideas. In reality the sequence is the opposite: they accept his ideas because they have submitted to his authority in a semihypnotic fashion.

This is irrational faith. When Srila Prabhupada said, "I blindly followed my spiritual master," this is not what he meant; but when we quote Prabhupada, ninety-five percent of the time irrational submission is precisely what we mean; and, unfortunately, the other five percent we invariably mean the same thing.

Hitler and Mussolini were extreme examples of the semihypnotic authority. We have less extreme examples whom we sometimes refer to more innocently as the charismatic speaker. Hitler employed the process of irrational faith-making when he advised his henchmen to hold their propaganda meetings at the end of the day, when people's resistance is weaker. In *Mein Kampf*, he wrote, "The superior oratorical talent of a domineering apostolic nature will succeed more easily."

In our case, however, any time is good for the domineering apostolic speaker to succeed in manipulating our will, because we have a whole philosophy emphasizing submission, making us vulnerable to irrational authorities. A good rule of thumb to apply, therefore, when dealing

with domineering authorities, is to ask oneself, "If it was him being preached to in this way, would he follow blindly?"

If you cannot imagine the speaker submitting to an authority very much like himself, as in the case of the lecturer featured in this chapter, then most likely you are facing an irrational authority. Indeed in our society many of the authority figures have a history of being incapable of accepting anyone's authority. They had to run the show or go bust. They say they accept Prabhupada's authority, but we have to see if they do so in a rational or irrational way. When confronted with an irrational authority, rather than contort our intelligence to make it all rational or transcendental, it is best to reject him or her. Indeed the strength to reject irrational authority is intrinsic to shedding illusions. We should follow a rational authority, Srila Prabhupada. He says: "Even there is duty we have to see what will be the effect of the duty. Not everything should be done very blindly. This is devotee. Devotee means he's not blind." When *Bhagavatam* says, there is no use trying to cross the material ocean by boarding a stone boat, or holding on to a dog's tail, it is cautioning us against irrational authority. With this distinction clear in our minds, let's go through a lecture delivered in 1996 in one of our ISKCON temples in the USA. My candid remarks are in italics:

And Prabhupada would repeatedly say, 'Just learn to get along.' You'll take one person out, you'll put another person in, and you'll find just as many discrepancies. So many examples I have of this.

What is Krsna trying to teach us? He is trying to teach us that each of us should just learn to get along. So many times I saw examples. Prabhupada would have to settle disputes between devotees. Many times."

Then Prabhupada said, 'The best thing is that everyone will get along if you can all figure out common activities to take up. Figure out a common activity.' And then Prabhupada said, 'Harinam sankirtana. You all go out and do sankirtana together, and by doing a common activity you will learn to appreciate each other.' Therefore, I think that the common activity is to build this project. Here's a project that everybody can do something for. We can all cooperate. Sunday Feast program, we can all cooperate. Somehow we have to cooperate. That's the key to spiritual life. It's the most difficult thing to do. In this age, this is called Kali Yuga. What does Kali Yuga mean? Age of quarrel. The nature of this age is that people are always disagreeing. But somehow we have to learn to see the good in each other.

Prabhupada said, 'We have to develop the mentality of the bee, the bumblebee.' Instead of the other thing the fly. Flies are moving in the air, bees are moving in the air. But what is the fly looking for? Some salt to land on. The body has salt. And what is the bee looking for? Some fragrant flower, to get some pollen, and make honey. The fly makes disease, the bee makes honey. Both are creatures of the air, flying about. So Prabhupada said develop the mentality of the bee, not the fly." *(Translation: See everything as wonderful. If you have to deny your perceptions to see pollen where there is salt, no worries, "Prabhupada said." But when the speaker sees salt--look out! The most interesting thing is that after this brilliant opening about getting along and seeing the good in each other the lecturer will switch modes. Stay tuned).*

Jesus said the same thing, first cast, whoever can, you know, first, what is that cast out the, huh? Huh? What is it? I can't. What is the word. Plank in the eye, OK that's what I heard you say. I couldn't. Anyway, he said, you know, cast out the mote or something from the eye, cast out from your own eye, that thing. *(Jesus said first remove the beam in your own eye before you try to remove the mote in another's eye. In ISKCON, however, only the followers have beams and this handicaps one so much that even if the leaders transgress human decency to ridiculous extremes, you can't protest, because you can never cast out your beam. No matter how much you may think your beam is gone, it's never gone until "they" say so. Meanwhile, what happened to their beam? They are beamless, having been rubber-stamped as pure devotees by the institution).*

But this is the appeal that Prabhupada made in his final days, he made this appeal: Please learn to live with each other, empower each other. *(And you, dear reader, shall soon see how this speaker intends to empower his audience in ways that would make Rupa and Sanatana cringe).*

You should ask, to your guru, what is it that you want. Please tell me, what is the standard, and I will accept it. Whatever you say, I accept. Blindly. This is what Prabhupada was expecting of us. *(Well, I saw a case where Prabhupada gave a disciple China for his preaching, a land of 1 billion population, and that disciple, instead of following blindly the order of his guru, got involved in raganuga-bhakti, supposedly, then when that didn't work out he enrolled in college, not in China, but the USA. Meanwhile others are doing the work in China and he is accepting the credit for spreading Krsna consciousness there. What are we supposed to make of that in light of this lecture presentation?)*

I saw a case where Prabhupada's, very senior disciple of Prabhupada, he has become convinced that our movement should have only one incorporation in all of the United States. One registered incorporated society for all the temples. Prabhupada continuously told him no, but he was with some lawyers, and they were advising him this would be the best way to organize, but Prabhupada kept saying, "no, no, no, no". And this person kept insisting this was a better way. But finally Prabhupada said, "You are simply under the control of lawyers." and they want to tie you up, and tie all us up. But I want to see each temple separately incorporated."

And actually, it was so much more intelligent on Prabhupada's part, as we have seen history prove. Finally this senior person, he went in and he offered his resignation. What was he resigning from? Actually he was offering the statement, "I have no faith". *(Well, gee whiz, I find this is not so logical. In such circumstances people in responsible positions often resign because they are ashamed of their blunder. They failed their responsibility so they feel that resigning expresses regret for their bad judgment. Some people deserve to resign for their blunders, such as doing things that compromise the integrity of Prabhupada's mission, which is comparable to treason, but being shameless they do not. Then they have the unmitigated gall to lecture about someone who is not shameless, as having no faith. This speaker, for instance, took a siksa-guru and then rejected him, yet did not resign for all the confusion he caused the society. Then instead of coming clean--and also resigning--he co-wrote a paper not exposing himself, but his siksa-guru, which is Vaisnava-aparadha of the worse kind. Now he wants us to follow him, blindly. Amazing. Gifted Shakespeare could not write better farce. In this connection, Fromm wrote a most appropriate passage:*

For irrational faith, the sentence "Credo quia absurdum est"--"I believe because it is absurd" has full psychological validity. If somebody makes a statement which is rationally sound, he does what, in principle, everyone else can do. If, however, he dared to make a statement which has transcended the faculty of common sense and thus has a magic power which puts him above the average person.

(Ain't it the truth?).

And Prabhupada had surrounded himself with all of us, just to be there. And another person who was also agreeing with that other devotee, when Prabhupada finally put down, and says, no, "Finally, I say no," that one person offered his resignation, and the other person said, "I don't understand this, but whatever Prabhupada says I will accept." And one person left and fell away, and the other one stayed. *(The events mentioned may be accurate, but it is not necessarily a fact that one event was the cause of the other. But why should logic and discretion get in the way of a good story? Next the speaker takes a new tack).*

So who is your authority? That you insist it must be this way, or I will go and, who is the authority? If you don't accept guru as authority, then what is the question of bhakti? What is the question of bhakti if there is no guru. And if you say, "Prabhupada is my guru," I also don't say that only Prabhupada is my guru, I still have other authorities. *(Some of us accept or reject authorities as suits our needs. We saw for example that some gurus accepted a siksa-guru then rejected him when the going got tough. Then a paper was circulated arguing that the siksa-guru, who was earlier promoted as the "bandhu" and siksa disciple of Srila Prabhupada, was not bona fide. Should devotees accept as guru those who accepted such an unqualified siksa-guru? If he is unqualified, how could one who is a guru accept him? If he is qualified, how could one reject him? Who in their right mind will do this person as an authority on Krsna consciousness?)*

And I'm a disciple of Prabhupada's. I cannot understand how people can go on proposing, and suggesting and advising and even fighting on what they think are things which are wrong and how it should be righted. *(Notice how the speaker assumes that what "they think" must be wrong out of hand. Whether it is really wrong or not is not addressed. If you think something is wrong and this authority, who has made more major blunders in our society than all others put together in the last 30 years, disagrees with you, then you are wrong, wrong, wrong. It just could be that you have a conscience telling you "Here is a problem and this is how it should be righted." That makes a lot of sense. If he disagrees with you, however, then your conscience has to be wrong. But, sastra says, acintya khalu ye bhava tams tarkena yojayet, it is difficult to conceive something that is inconceivable to us. If the speaker never experienced a conscience, then of course he cannot understand, or even imagine, how you can have one).* Why don't they ask the guru, and just accept? *(Perhaps because they have noticed how alike this guru is with the mall-wrecking car chase in the movie The Blues Brothers).*

That's what we were asked to do, in Prabhupada's time. *(No sir. Prabhupada was personable and consistent, not authoritarian, erratic, irrational, and crazy-making. He never asked us to blindly follow him as implied here. We could discuss things with him and he would actually listen and actually consider and actually change his practical ideas some of the time, hence the implied comparison is simply odious).*

And if you say because you're not qualified, then find someone who is, and find a society where you can live peacefully. *(And fulfill the speaker's life's dream--leave ISKCON to him? Why should anyone who loves Prabhupada do that? We heard about the same speaker's tantrum in Vrndavana to Narada Muni prabhu, "I'm the institution. I'm ISKCON. . .," ranting on and on. Prabhupada said that his Guru Maharaja went away and his godbrothers were thinking "Their property. Who are these godbrothes, let them go away." He also said that history repeats itself. Sure enough, this speaker will tell us to go away. . .)*

If I go into your home, and I start telling you, "I don't think you live properly in your home. You should change the way you live in your home", you'll look at me and say, "Why are you telling me how I will live in my home? This is my home." So we have our home. Prabhupada has made this home, he has appointed certain representatives to be in charge of his home. So if you don't like the way his home is, there are so many homes you can live in. If I come into your home, and I start telling you, "I don't like the way you live in your home. You should not live like this." You'll say, "Who gives you the right to come in my home and tell me this?" *(This is rich. Such powerful preaching. What ever happened to "the house in which the whole world can live?" Now ISKCON is not "our home" bequeathed to us by Prabhupada, in which "we" must get along. It is his home. He'll tell us how to live in his home or send us packing. He has no conception of representing Prabhupada as a facilitator, only as a dictator; but was that Prabhupada's intention? And the irony of it is that with all this isvara bhava--more like an isvara complex, actually--he was fighting tooth and nail with the GBC for two years running so he could have a home in Mathura and practice raganuga. And he argued then that Prabhupada wanted that too. Aaagghhhh!!! Contrast all this with how the lecture began*

about cooperate for Srila Prabhupada and we must get along and not quarrel etc. But when it comes down to it, ISKCON is his and cooperation means that he tells you what to do and you do it. "My way or the highway" or better still, the morgue, if this audience really takes this speaker to heart and kills all who disagree with their guru. . .).

So, this home belongs to the Deity, and the Deity has representatives, clearly stated in scripture, and clearly described by Prabhupada in the articles of incorporation of this society. *(I love when we use philosophy to support, . . . ummm, sorry, I mean manipulate the minds of others. Here is the translation: I represent the Deity, who is absolute. Hence, I'm also absolute. You can't reason with the Deity, so don't expect to reason with me. What I say goes. And if you find me crazy-making and confused it is all your fault, because I represent the Deity." Whew!!!! Dear reader, get ready for this. The speaker is the same person whose letter earlier promised us 25 more years of politics, nastiness, manipulation, and so on, in the name of raganuga. Now he is the absolute representative of the Deity. Is this a devotee or demagogue?)*

You don't have the right to continuously come in, and give so many arguments about how this home should be run. *(Oh yeah? But you had that right when you wanted to turn us all on to your siksa-guru. How about when the dynamics in the society are not as Prabhupada wanted? Must we observe the form that Prabhupada gave us, even if the content he wanted is lacking? In short, only you and the representatives of the Deity are empowered to know black from white. The rest of us have no rights; we are sheep. We read the same books and chant the same holy names, but only you understand anything. Only you, sir, have a brain. The rest of us have wool).*

If you don't like it, then go to another home. But please leave us alone. Stop harassing us. We're happy the way we are. *(Tut, tut, don't get worked up into a quarrel. You said that somehow we must get along for Srila Prabhupada, remember? Is this what you meant? As for being "happy the way we are," what kind of argument is that? When Indra became a hog he made this argument to Narada. He had not the least interest how his lot could be improved. Are we emulating Indra as a model Vaisnava? The speaker was happy accepting a siksa-guru, now he's happy rejecting his siksa-guru, which is an offense, so his current happiness has to be an illusion. Prabhupada said that one in illusion is not fit to be a guru, even if he is happier than Indra. Incidentally, the feelings he expresses have been the sentiments of many devotees towards him, so whom shall the verdict favor?)*

You want to take a vote, you'll find that out. *(I'm all for a vote. Let's take a referendum from the Vaisnavas worldwide about his situation, especially after seeing this lecture and the analysis, and understanding the process of estrangement from one's own conscience, and explanation above about the irrational domineering apostolic type).*

We're not going to leave this home, and we're not going to change. *(Another GBC man has assured us that "the leaders will never change" although they need to, and now we have it straight from the source, they are not leaving and they are not changing).*

It's going to be the way Prabhupada established it. *(That's interesting. But when? You also promised not to change, but to give more politics etc., for 25 more years, so what gives, pray tell? Are you asking us to accept a post-dated check or are you saying that Prabhupada wanted what you promised us? Actually, your statement confirms that we currently don't have what Prabhupada established. Methinks it was a Freudian slip betwixt subconscious and lip).* It's not going to change for your speculative ideas. You have the right to live your life the way you want, and we have the right to lead our life the way Prabhupada said it. And that won't change. *(Who's disagreeing with the principle? What we have to work out is the application. Are you doing what Prabhupada said? He specifically told you don't run off the devotees, and here you are telling them love it or leave it. How come you don't blindly follow that instruction of Srila Prabhupada. You want us to assume that whatever you say, that's the way Prabhupada said it. Your case will be invincible, sir, if you show, don't tell. Dear reader, I*

know you will find this hard to believe, but from here, his lecture goes into overdrive, so hang on. . .)

If you blaspheme, the only way from that is described. Because you used your tongue to blaspheme, you have to use your tongue to beg forgiveness. Otherwise, if they don't do that, according to scripture, the tongue is supposed to be cut out, and then the person is supposed to be killed. *(Here we go. This is the real nectar that we receive in parampara. Blaspheme who? That is not clarified so we have to assume he means himself, the person who wants to dictate and manipulate in raganuga. Blaspheme how? Also not clarified. Here the philosophy is used to incite fanatical emotions in the audience. Unabashedly. After Waco, Jim Jones, Manson and our man in New Vrndavana, imagine what someone with a good lawyer could do in court with this lecture. Perhaps the speaker in the previous chapter has a good point. Perhaps we don't need my books, we need a miracle).*

Now we don't say that. Scripture says it, we don't say it, because it's against the law. So those things cannot be done at the present in the United States of America or practically anywhere in the world, because *Manu-Samhita* is not followed. But *Manu-Samhita* says that. *(Oh dear, as we shall see, the token disclaimer is way out of proportion to the stress on cutting out tongues and killing blasphemers. It does not take a college education to see that this speaker wants that whoever disagrees with him, myself, for example, is to be blindly, passionately, irrationally, regarded as a blasphemer. It sounds so like the sannyasi who tried to whip up a frenzy over his lost shoe. Of course, Manu-Samhita is not followed, but will that deter a fanatic disciple from doing the needful to please gurudeva? Some already risked the mundane laws to please another "guru" out in West Virginia. And isn't it too bad we don't follow Manu-Samhita? If we did, what an efficient little organization we could run. We could solve a lot of problems in timely fashion. Simply furnish all devotees with gloves, mask, apron, garrote, and scalpel kits, in case they encounter a blasphemer. Or perhaps skip the garrote and have the scalpel double as tongue remover and throat slitter. It's messy but it saves Krsna's money).*

A blasphemer must apologize, with the same tongue that he blasphemed he must beg forgiveness from the person he offended. If he doesn't, his tongue should be cut out, and the person should be put to death. *(He is unabashedly speaking about offense to himself. Has he apologized to those he has offended, like his siksa-guru, among so many droves of others? Suppose some fanatic supporter of his rejected siksa-guru decided to remove his tongue or put him to death, inspired by his lecture? Doesn't this beat all? Here's a thought: the GBC pressured this guru to give up his siksa-guru, so perhaps they are blasphemers. Hmmm . . . Keep in mind that he has not defined blasphemy; he conveniently leaves that open to any fanatic disciple's guess. . . . And now, the coup de grace. . .).*

And then you should kill yourself, for having heard the blasphemy. Now who is going to do any of that? Nobody can do any of these things. It's not enough that the tongue is cut out and then you have to kill the person, then you have to kill yourself for hearing the blasphemy. That means blasphemy is so injurious that it destroys your spiritual life. And there's no way around it. You hear blasphemy, you become affected. *(Too right. I'm becoming affected by this lecture. It reads like something out of a Kafka story, or something emanating for the infamous Wannasee Conference, in which the Nazis took a decision to implement "the final solution." I think it blasphemes Prabhupada).*

Therefore, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, before even hearing the words of a Mayavadi, only seeing an impersonalist by form, he would jump into the Ganges with all of his clothing on. Just when he saw the face of an impersonalist. He became so horrified that to purify himself, that image that had come on the mind, he would jump in the Mother Ganges, and pray, "Please purify me". *(Good prayer. Reading this lecture I've thought like that several times. Would that the speaker took his own advice as well).*

I gave a lecture in Los Angeles once about blasphemy of gurus, and I was very strong. I thought I never would tolerate anyone blaspheming Prabhupada. I never would tolerate it. Never would tolerate such a thing. *(But was it out of love for Srila Prabhupada, or because of not wanting to miss the opportunity to rationalize an innate sadistic nature? The question is valid, dear reader, because this speaker sat in an audience and the lecturer said things that slighted Srila Prabhupada and afterwards this speaker praised the lecturer and accused those who opposed him of Vaisnava-aparadha. Okay, so that was a mistake, but when put with all his other mistakes, a certain pattern emerges--a pattern that warrants therapy even in a layman's opinion. One GBC man said about this speaker, "He'll never change. He was like this when Prabhupada was here and he'll never change." The GBC man told me, "If I go against him I'll simply commit Vaisnava aparadha." This I find bewildering. Gour Govinda Maharaja said that to commit Vaisnava aparadha is very difficult because "First you have to find a Vaisnava." If this speaker will never change, why don't we change? Why neglect Prabhupada's instruction to completely neglect such people?)*

So then one person in the audience said, you know, I said many strong things, so one person in the audience, ha ha, I won't tell who. Anyway, it was quite a, you might know this person. Anyway, I'll tell the story. One person was sitting in the audience, and he said, "So you mean to say if someone blasphemes your guru, you must stop him in any case?" I said, "Yes". So that person go up and he started to come at me and attack me. And immediately the *ksatriyas* in the temple grabbed him, hauled him out of the temple, and beat him mercilessly. But six or seven months later that person came to _____, he surrendered, and became my disciple. . Now I can only think that because of the mercy of that beating, he changed his consciousness. *(Poor fellow. A merciless beating can make most people lose their wits. Also, just as there is intellectual sadism, there is intellectual masochism, so maybe this was the perfect arrangement in terms of temperaments. A match made in . . . , well, perhaps in Poe's famous pit).*

The excerpts from the above lecture appeared in Rocana's book. This was his remarks at the end:

Keep in mind this is the presentation from someone who has been giving classes almost every day for thirty years, and is presenting himself as a Vaisnava *sannyasi*, *diksa* link to the *sampradaya*. The entire lecture contained no quotes from bona-fide Vaisnava *sastra*, just the *Manu-Samhita* reference that we should cut out their tongues and kill them. He says, "Scripture says it, we don't say it."

Dear reader, what you have just read which was delivered as a Krsna conscious lecture is precisely what the anti-cult people are fearing when they rant and rave about destructive cults. Please, taking your feet upon my head, I implore you in Prabhupada's name to not be deceived by irrational authorities. Please, remember these words of Srila Prabhupada:

Even there is duty we have to see what will be the effect of the duty. Not everything should be done very blindly. This is devotee. Devotee means he's not blind.

It means one does not have to have irrational faith and submit to irrational authorities. Bali Maharaja became a *mahajana* because he did not follow blindly. We have to see what will be the effect of duty. Everything should be accepted with care and with caution. We do not want

to deceive, but we also do not want to be deceived. That is our sacred duty to Srila Prabhupada and the *parampara*.

Finally, in the critically acclaimed first novel by Josephine Hart, *Damage*, a work of keen psychological insight, these memorable lines are repeated a few times: "Damaged people are dangerous. They know they can survive." In the Krsna consciousness movement, wherein we are enticed to see only the good, my stipulation is that they are *more* dangerous, because can survive considerably longer. The whole philosophy can be twisted to work in their favor; and they know it. Our only defense against them is knowledge and hard-headed realism.

Chapter Sixteen - Listen, Little Prabhu!

In 1933 Wilhelm Reich published *The Mass Psychology of Facism* in which he elaborately explained how authoritarianism is not primarily the outcome of economic factors or the devious planning of political leaders: It springs from the masses. Specifically it is the collective expression of their fear of freedom. For if they did not fear the freedom to take responsibility to think for themselves--which Prabhupada wanted ISKCON to train us to do--the masses would never let authoritarian leaders dehumanize them, terrorize them, ruin them outwardly and inwardly.

I'm simplifying Reich's idea, but that is the gist. The Nazis promptly banned his book, because, as always, books get banned or bad-mouthed when they are on target. Those who get "hit" scream the loudest. Then in 1945 Reich wrote *Listen, Little Man*, a simplified version which goes right to the heart of the previous work. If we can understand the "little man" concept, we shall be able to understand where the ultimate responsibility for bad dynamics in ISKCON sit--not with our leaders but with us. At the same time, it takes two hands to clap.

A sentence on the back cover of *Listen, Little Man* gives us a clue to the slant of the book: "The author forcefully points out that the price of quiescence is tyranny. . . ." Just as the quiescence of the little man leads to tyranny, so in ISKCON the quiescence of our Little Prabhus caused our society to malfunction by accepting the unacceptable--irrationality and authoritarian dealings. The atmosphere of authoritarianism ruins the human psyche. It makes the victim neurotic from the suppressed emotion, which then manifests in aberrant behavior in some or all spheres of our lives, depending on the degree of seriousness. So we have child abuse, increasing irrationality, and other kinds of disturbing symptoms that upset the stability of our society. We have a group neuroses.

These symptoms are simply indicative of our repressed dissatisfaction with the quality of our lives in our positive alternative society.

When Little Prabhus accept being humiliated as humility; when they avoid community issues "to do bhajan;" when they don't demand that the leaders behave in rational ways and command respect instead of demanding it; when they don't question the questionable things that go on, perhaps perpetrated on their neighbor; the Little Prabhus create the atmosphere favorable for authoritarian dynamics. We get a conscienceless group organism in which no one feels responsible for that happens within the group. Then we get on a downward spiral, if not a nosedive. No amount of external social re-arrangements will solve this internal problem.

The Little Prabhu in all of us must first be healed. Actually, not healed, but exorcised or killed, beheaded.

Studies of group dynamics show that as long as members let the Little Man run their thinking, the group will remain potentially conscienceless and evil--unless and until every member holds himself or herself directly responsible for what goes on in the whole group organism of which he or she is a part. Accepting this responsibility is one of several things Srila Prabhupada meant when he said that ISKCON is for training independently thoughtful men.

II

Listen, Little Man is chock full of quotable passages relevant to us. I therefore recommend readers to get hold of this book and read it carefully. However, to convey a feel for Reich's concept of the Little Man, I cite a selection of passages from the book and make remarks after each one:

He (the ordinary members of society) must learn to know reality which alone can counteract his disastrous craving for authority. He must be told clearly what *responsibility* he carries. . . because he turns lively and healthy children into cripples, robots and moral idiots; because with him, the state comes before right, the lie before truth, war before life; because the child, and the safeguarding of the living in the child, remains our only hope.

For us, we turn individuals into servants of the institution, which takes the place of the state. Hence the institution comes before right, and our task is to fit people into the institution as much as possible. "Disastrous craving for authority" means that no matter the rhetoric we use--love, compassion, service, surrender--the real business is submission to authority. In principle this is supposed to aid us in achieving the lotus feet of Krsna, but functionally by the alienation process the authority replaces Him.

This situation is not entirely the fault of our leaders. It is the fault of our Little Prabhus who remain quiescent and pliant in the face of our many anomalies, always finding some way to use the philosophy to inoculate ourselves against the reality: Little Prabhus use the teachings of Krsna consciousness to dull their awareness, whereas true Krsna consciousness means to live in heightened awareness.

When our cooperation comes from such a state of being, we are showing our love for Srila Prabhupada. We should not be like an innocent child guided by a presumed benign father. *Don't deceive; but also don't be deceived.* This has to happen, for the success of ISKCON depends on it. Our individual success depends on it as well.

III

. . . first of all, have a look at yourself. See yourself as you really are. Listen to what none of your Fuhrers and representatives dares tell you:

You are a "little, common man". Understand the double meaning of these words: "little" and "common."

Don't run. Have the courage to look at yourself!

"What right do you have to tell me things?" I can see this question in your apprehensive look. I hear this question from your impertinent mouth, Little Man. You are afraid to look at yourself, you are afraid of criticism, Little Man, just as you are afraid of the power they promise you. You would not know how to use this power. You dare not think that you ever might experience your self differently: free instead of cowed; open instead of tactical; loving openly instead of like a thief in the night. You despise yourself Little Man. You say: "Who am I to have an opinion of my own, to determine my own life and to declare the world to be mine?" You are right: Who are you to make a claim to your life?

This is the picture of the disempowered man. The cipher. And Little Prabhus think that this is a normal condition in Krsna consciousness; they think it is the natural result of practicing *trnad api sunicena*. . . . It isn't. The Little Prabhu psychology is disguised self-contempt rationalized as humble striving of a humble Vaisnava. In reality, Krsna consciousness confers the full capacity to respond to life's demands. This is the lesson of Arjuna's example. Consciousness means aliveness, heightened awareness. It means one feels--not powerless, but powerful, for Krsna.

Little Prabhus have it all backwards. They think surrender means to become zero and be led by the nose to the spiritual world. In reality the venture calls for strenuous effort to break free from the three modes of nature. Thus Krsna says that discriminating on the basis of the three modes of nature is "the supreme wisdom." The *Oxford Concise Dictionary* defines wisdom as "knowledge along with the ability to apply it critically and practically." The implication is that we have to take full responsibility to activate our intelligence to discriminate in all matters. This is called seeing through the eyes of the *sastra*. At present, however, we want to avoid the work of discriminating. We rather base our understanding on popular opinion, which is no substitute for seeing through the *sastra*. We want a version of Krsna consciousness in which we don't have to think.

Another way we try to evade the effortful approach to devotional service is by heaping all the responsibility on the guru. In a class a devotee asked a question that summed up the thinking of many devotees: "If you have a guru and you know your guru is a *paramahamsa*, do you still have to do this?"

The question indicates exactly the Little Man mentality: "If I find someone who will take all responsibility for me and I just go along for the ride, what's wrong with that?" Another time, another audience, a devotee burst out, "All this responsibility you are stressing is only necessary because people don't have a bona fide guru. People don't understand *guru-tattva*." It's the same argument--if you have a bona guru spiritual life becomes effortless. Another Little Prabhu he was. Did Krsna fight for Arjuna or did He inspire Arjuna to fight? And is not this dynamic the standard role of the guru, to bring out the best in the disciple?

Another time I received a letter: "You advocate using one's intelligence for becoming Krsna conscious. I prefer the path of hearing the nectar pastimes of the Lord." As if there are two paths. Actually hearing the pastimes requires intelligence to understand properly, hence the vast commentaries by our *acaryas*. These Little Prabhus don't realize that the *paramahamsa* guru, if he is a *paramahamsa* guru, is going to teach them to become independently thoughtful--that we must take responsibility for becoming *asammoha*. The guru teaches us how to fly; he does not fly for us.

As for the letter writer on a different path, we do not have two paths. We have one path, *bhakti-marga*. But people on the path stress different aspects of the overall process. We have the *bhajanandi* and the *ghosthyanandi*. Both are authentic. However, the followers of Srila Rupa Gosvami are mandated to be *ghosthyanandis*. Yet if someone insists on being a

bhajanandi we can't damn that person. By the same token, we can't damn that person who wants to be a *ghosthyanandi* and fulfill the preacher's duty, which is to discriminate, which means to embrace the task of constantly analyzing the outer and inner world to distinguish reality from illusion, and to encourage others to do likewise according to their capacity. Little Prabhus, however, want to avoid being *ghosthyanandis* (too much work) and yet not make a clear commitment to being *bhajanandis* (also too much work). Instead they try to escape responsibility to distinguish between reality and illusion by throwing themselves at "nectar *lila*," assuming that "If I just throw myself at reality, I'll be out of illusion." That notion itself is an illusion; it is the "magic helper" approach to Krsna consciousness. But Little Prabhus don't want to hear this. They don't appreciate that getting out of illusion is a scientific process. They prefer to go by a wish and a prayer.

IV

I shall tell you who you are:

You are different from the really great man in only one thing: The great man, at one time, also was a very little man, but he developed *one* important ability: he learned to see where he was small in his thinking, and actions. Under the pressure of some task which was dear to him he learned better and better to sense the threat that comes from his smallness and pettiness. *The great man, then, knows when and in what he is a little man. The Little Man does not know that he is little, and he is afraid of knowing it.* He covers up his smallness and narrowness with illusions of strength and greatness, of *others'* strength and greatness. He is proud of his great generals but not proud of himself. He admires thought which he did *not* have and not the thought he *did* have. He believes in things all the more thoroughly the less he comprehends them, and does not believe in the correctness of those ideas which he comprehends most easily.

Little Prabhus are exactly as Reich describes. This passage does not need much elaboration. The central point is that the Little Prabhu is lazy to penetrate the *persona*, the mask that others wear and look at their character, look at them as they really are. He is afraid of knowing others because he is afraid of knowing himself. Knowing others is integral to knowing ourselves and to do this one must exercise one's faculty for analytical thinking. The Little Prabhu disempowers himself from this responsibility by thinking that he has no right to look at others. He must only try to improve himself. He has to come up to snuff, before thinking about whether another is up to snuff himself. In ISKCON this passes as rational thinking. It is wondrous the varieties of ways the Little Prabhus can apply intelligence to disempower themselves.

V

. . . slowly and gropingly, I found what makes you a slave: YOU ARE YOUR OWN SLAVE-DRIVER. Nobody else--nobody except yourself carries the responsibility for your slavery. . .

I tell you: *Only you yourself can be your liberator!* This sentence makes me hesitate. I contend to be a fighter for pureness and truth. And now, when it is a matter of telling you the truth about yourself, I hesitate, because I am afraid of you and your attitude towards the truth. To say the truth about you is

dangerous to life. The truth is also life-saving, but it becomes the loot of every gang. If that were not so, you would not be what you are and where you are.

My intellect tells me: "Tell the truth, at any cost." The Little Man in me says: "It is stupid to expose oneself to the Little Man, to put oneself at his mercy. The Little Man does not want to hear the truth about himself. He does not want the great responsibility which is his. He wants to remain a Little Man, or wants to become a little great man. He wants to become rich, or a party leader, or commander of a legion, or secretary of the society for the abolition of vice. But he does not want to assume responsibility for his work. . .

Throughout history, we have been subjected to the tyranny of the Little Men, whose major contribution is persecuting the truth-sayers. Indeed to say the truth about them is dangerous to life. Just consider the mentality behind the lecturer in the previous chapter. Little Men instinctively want to make all others into mental midgets like themselves. They yearn to avoid traversing the road less travelled, the road of assuming responsibility for themselves, and believe, ardently, that all others should follow their lead, because mental midgets love company. They cannot stand to be disillusioned even with the voice of an angel. Therefore, Little Men killed Socrates' for "corrupting the youth," or in ISKCONspeak, for "disturbing the devotees." They killed Christ and so many others. The same Little Men later on glorify their victims as great men. Then they deify them and make cults in their names. Tell a Little Man anything, but don't tell him the truth. And yet the truth and the truth alone shall set the Little Man free. And so it is with the Little Prabhu.

They are a danger to life, the Little Prabhu. Their one good fortune is that the truth-sayers are willing to risk their lives to set the Little Prabhus free. The truth-sayers know how difficult their task is, because the same Little Prabhus can be so ungrateful. The history of man is bathed in blood for all the saintly persons they persecuted and then later exalted. Therefore the truth-sayers, taking stock of the situation, say, "If one person becomes an independently thoughtful man, my mission is a success. Better to have one moon than millions of flickering stars." How difficult is the truth-sayers task!

If only one person, out of billions, shakes off being a Little Man, or in our case a Little Prabhu, the truth-sayer is satisfied. In no other calling can one claim satisfaction with such a miniscule result. In ISKCON we tend to assume all members count among the moons, but if we study Prabhupada's words he is hoping for just one moon to emerge from the assembly of stars. And it was never his idea to do so by rubber-stamping.

The fact that truth-sayers are invariably persecuted by their contemporaries does not mean we should not say truth. Truth is the only antidote to illusion. A truth-sayer must have faith in the statement *satyam eva jayate*. This faith means that truth will be victorious, not because someone else stands up for it, but because I stand up for it. Why should I stand up for the truth? Because *satyam param dhimahi*, I meditate on the truth. I live in the truth. I am dedicated to the truth. I am the unflinching servant of the truth.

A Vaisnava, unlike the Little Man, does not care about being warm and fuzzy. A Vaisnava loves the truth. He will take risks for the truth he loves. That is his happiness.

In *Our Mission: Part Three*, we shall see that living a life of truth is integral to developing our courage. Those dedicated to being truth-sayers all have a built-in mechanism that reinforces their courage--it is their clear conscience. The satisfaction that comes from achieving and keeping a clear conscience is so wonderful that those who experience it will not abandon it no matter the consequence. The Little Prabhus, like the Little Man, cannot imagine such a condition.

They feel obliged to eek out some other motive or they will create uphold some trivial reason, claiming that the truth-sayer should be ignored on the grounds of "the delivery," "the tone." Little Prabhus say, "You are too specific." "You quote meat-eaters." "There is no precedent." "This is not a *sastra*." "I don't think you are pleasing Srila Prabhupada." "You don't play the game. You gotta learn to play the game." Little Prabhus can be odious, rank, detestable creatures, and yet the truth-sayers have to swallow their pride and try to do some good to them, ungrateful as they are.

The same Little Prabhus used to criticize Srila Bhaktisiddhanta for his "chopping technique." What nonsense the Little Prabhus say in their desperation to avoid the truth that comes easily if they would only look at themselves. But they will not. "Truth-sayers are not tactful enough," they say. By tact they mean that the truth should be so vaguely expressed that it is anybody's guess what it means. Then various Little Prabhus can take credit for the correct interpretation of the truth, for their only business is to assess who will get the credit. Or they mean, the Little Prabhus, that if the truth-sayer would be tactical and shut up, he would realize that we would not hassle his life. We may even elevate him to being a Little Great Prabhu. Or they want that the truth-sayer forget about the truth and just preach virtue.

The Little Prabhu becomes deft at using the teachings of Krsna for eluding the deluding of himself. He uses the philosophy to drug himself from becoming a hard-headed realist, which the very words "prajna" and "Krsna consciousness" imply. He says in essence, "I much prefer to depend on Krsna's mercy than use my intelligence." Can they really believe that Krsna gave us this wonderful faculty of intelligence so we can forego its use? What about the possibility that His gift of intelligence is the very mercy that the Little Prabhus plead for so ardently?

How the Little Prabhus are able to extract this understanding--becoming duller human beings instead of brighter--from the *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*, and from the example of our *acaryas*, is amazing. But Little Prabhus are convinced they have a firm grip on the essence of Krsna consciousness: Being irrational is advancement; being rational is false ego.

When the truth-sayer points out that the problem of not being able to honor the truth, regardless of how it appears, is not the truth-sayer's problem, but that of the Little Prabhus, because they stand to lose by not living in reality, what do the Little Prabhus do? They say, "Oh no, we don't have a problem. You have a problem, because unless you let us dictate how you can reveal the truth, or even if we will accept it from you at all, we will make so many problems for you. *Touche!* "

Having laid down the law, the same Little Prabhu sits on the Vyasasana and tells the audience all about how Krsna is in control and how He has a plan for our purification; how we must learn to see the good in everything; how we must get along and cooperate for Srila Prabhupada. This he speaks with utter conviction, and sees no inconsistency whatsoever. You are not honest, Little Prabhu. You say you want truth, when all you want is stroking.

This is the Little Man's perspective, because he holds other things as higher than truth--his popularity, his saving face--for example. He values his image or self-esteem more than his self-respect. He wants to be comfortable and loved and secure more than he wants to live in the truth, which he loudly professes to be his prime goal in life. Inwardly, he is a shrunken Little Prabhu, overcome with self-loathing, which he displays as fidelity to Prabhupada, and he believes his own false advertising.

If he sees anyone unlike him, who is free of self-loathing, bouyant, ebullient, and happy, surcharged with enthusiasm to preach, who inspires the devotees to be thoughtful, the Little Man inside our Little Prabhu goes into spasms of envy and disbelief. Whomsoever he cannot damn by faint praise he goes all out to disturb by politics, and the Littlest of the Little Prabhus believes that this is his duty to Srila Prabhupada.

Perish the thought that anyone else has succeeded where he has failed, taking full responsibility for their life, thus refusing to be a Little Prabhu, or a Little Great Prabhu.

The truly great man takes your freedom deadly seriously. In order to establish it in a practical way, he has to surround himself with many little men, helpers and errand boys, because he cannot do the gigantic job by himself. Furthermore, you would not understand him, and would let him fall by the wayside, if he had not surrounded himself with little great persons. Surrounded by many little great persons, he conquers power for you, or a piece of the truth, or a new, better belief. He writes gospels, freedom laws, etc., and counts on your help and seriousness. He pulls you out of your social morass. In order to keep together the many little great persons, in order not to lose your confidence, the truly great man has to sacrifice piece after piece of his greatness, which he was able to attain only in the deepest intellectual loneliness, far from you and your everyday noise, and yet in close contact with your life. In order to be able to lead you he has to tolerate your transforming him into an inaccessible God. You would have no confidence in him if he had remained the simple man that he was. . .

Thought provoking. This passage directly comments on our last reform movement and how the Little Prabhus made a mess of that effort by transforming those who led them into Little Prabhus like themselves. One might even consider, keeping in mind that the Little Prabhu, like his materialistic counterpart, the Little Man, wants to remain a Little Prabhu, or wants to become a Little Great Prabhu. He wants to become a *sannyasi*, or head up a ministry for *sannyasa* or some other ministry, or be a GBC, or a guru, or some other designation. And, of course, Little Prabhus are in the same boat.

Alas, the leaders of our last reform movement succumbed to being made into inaccessible gods. They could not withstand the sacrifice of their greatness.

The above passage means that Srila Prabhupada too had to surround himself with Little Great Prabhus, just like Bhaktisiddhanta had to as well. However, being extraordinarily great, they did not succumb to the cycle described here, of going from truly great, to a Little Great Prabhu, because they did not allow the adoring masses to transform them into inaccessible gods. Little Prabhus have a penchant for deifying the *acarya*, thinking that it shows their devotional fervor; in reality it is a mechanism to put distance between themselves and the *acarya*, so they can plead helplessness, "Because no one can be like Srila Prabhupada." "Only you are that great Srila Prabhupada. We are like bugs." In this way, Little Prabhus disempower themselves from following in the footsteps of the *acarya*, whose message is "Understand the principle of *parampara* and become like me. Do as I'm doing. Like father, like son." But no, Little Prabhus want to disempower as many others as possible, because the Little Prabhu likes company in his misery.

VIII

In this way, *you* yourself produce your *new* master. Promoted to the role of new master, the great man loses his greatness because this greatness consisted in his straightforwardness, simplicity, courage, and real contact with life.

This is the crucial point that Little Prabhus must understand: We produce our masters and we elevate them to such imaginary great heights that they lose the common touch. Then we pay for our folly when the dynamic goes sour. The price of our quiescence is the same, always. On the other hand, some Little Prabhus resent straightforwardness, simplicity, and courage. They have a million ways to package their duplicity as love of harmony and so on and so forth. Either way, they lose touch.

In Mayapur during the 1996 GBC meetings a senior devotee came up to me. "I read your book, *Our Mission*. You did a good job expressing what we all feel. I hear you are catching hell for it." Then gesturing towards the building where the GBC meeting was in progress, he said, "Nobody is more out of touch with what's going on in this movement than the people meeting right now to decide how to lead it. They are in more illusion than anyone."

Experienced devotees know well that such a statement is not necessarily coming from malice or envy; it is a simple statement of fact, but few appreciate their role in this development. And fewer still can handle matter-of-fact dealings. But if you take the long scenic route, they exalt it as great Vaisnavism. Meanwhile Srila Bhaktisiddhanta suggest we avoid the duplicitous with the same vigilance that we avoid the horned species of animals.

We created this unhealthy predicament, when, in our haste to feel warm and fuzzy in spiritual life--because we value comfort and security more than truth--we elevated our masters to the realm of inaccessibility. We insisted on it so we could believe in them and respect them, but we must pay a high price for that adulation. They are now out of touch, estranged from us and yet, being attached to being masters, are in a position to impose tyranny and irrationality on us. We empowered them to do it.

We did the same thing with the zonal *acaryas*. It was not their idea. It was our idea, in the sense that we allowed it to happen, because we Little Prabhus are desperate to remain Little Prabhus or Little Great Prabhus.

We wanted to avoid the responsibility that comes with claiming our legacy from Srila Prabhupada. We wanted someone to take care of us, so we were quiescent while our Little Great Prabhus seized the opportunity to be zonal *acarya*, an absurd concept with no moorings in our philosophy. We had reform, but it was a hoax because there was no attitudinal change. Thus the same uncharitable, oppressive, irrational, might-is-right atmosphere we had before reform is still with us. Our Little Great Prabhus are still our leaders and we Little Prabhus are still the sheep.

Think of the most authoritarian devotees that you know in ISKCON. Most of us probably have the same persons in mind, but it is not necessary that we be thinking of the same ones. Now, picture this group of persons clearly in your mind. Now picture yourself telling them, clearly and firmly, assertively, that their dealings are not acceptable. You are deadly serious. You mean it to the extent that if they aggress on you one more time you are going to do all in your power to make sure it does not happen again.

Now, consider this: If you had sent such a clear message years ago, would those persons still be authoritarian with you today? Perhaps. Illusions of grandeur are difficult to shake, after all, but what if several of us had done the same thing--refused to comply with the authoritarian stance? Surely the "authorities" would have either straightened up and flown right, or quit. Either way our positive alternative society would have been all the better for it.

Therefore, the dysfunctional atmosphere in ISKCON is nobody's doing but our own. If we would have neglected to abide by irrational dealings we would have been following Prabhupada's instruction to completely neglect the mundane men in the dress of Vaisnavas in our Krsna consciousness movement.

"But if you believe we Little Prabhus did it to ourselves, why did you spend so many chapters analyzing how the leaders are doing it to us?" First, it is necessary to know symptoms of the disease affecting our group organism, then we can fight the disease in all its manifestations. Also, you need to be convinced that the disease is upon us and a very real threat to Prabhupada's life's work. Lastly, although we Little Prabhus created our masters, they had a hand in it, so they cannot deny responsibility for the dynamics they helped create. To turn the situation around we first have to know how serious is our situation and the implication of our condition, or we may not follow the prescription with conviction.

We tend to deny our perceptions for fear of *Vaisnava aparadha*. That, however, is not the only reason. We also do it because we are lazy, fearful of reprisal, knowing that if we process

our incoming data indicating how irrational are some of our authorities, how personally motivated, monstrous, petulant, even psychopathic, we will have to lose our idealism. But we also do it because we want to be blind. We don't want to face the reality that if we open our eyes, we will have to deal with the fact that some of our worshipable leaders have clay feet. But Prabhupada faced it, as we find out in Hari Sauri's *Transcendental Diary*:

Prabhupada complained to me again about his chest pains. . . He explained that the problems in management have created too much stress. . . He said he wouldn't become completely uninvolved because he was afraid ISKCON would become like the Gaudiya Math. Prabhupada wants relief from management, but he told me that unless he can be convinced that the GBC is able to work maturely, without personal motivation, he is not willing to give it up.

And with him departed, who will keep the personally motivated honest unless we do it? But Little Prabhu, you will counter this with silly thoughts about how this was in the past. Little Great Prabhus will explain how hard-working and sincere the GBC's are. This and that. We should not become quiescent. We must remain vigilant. That is the sign of good health. And our course since Prabhupada left, indeed even before he left, justifies our vigilance. Why, Little Prabhu, do you need to just have blind faith in the system? This is a good question to ask yourself.

You want to blindly trust the system, not out of a desire to cooperate for Srila Prabhupada, although you will justify it with this very reason. Your real motive however, oh, Little Prabhu, is that you want to be peaceful and you want to enjoy ISKCON. Not serve ISKCON, but enjoy it. And you know full well that "If I play along with the Little Great Prabhus, I will eventually reach the top, then I can enjoy even better." So you bide your time and try to win the favor of the Little Great Prabhus--a title or two, a perk here and there--and you tell yourself you are getting Krsna's mercy, not realizing that you are becoming more and more lost to yourself in the name of seeking self-realization.

Little Prabhu, the qualification for going to the *nitya-lila* of *Vrajendranandana* is not your enjoyment; it is your service attitude. You believe you want *prema-bhakti*, but actually you don't want to serve. If you wanted to serve, you would never, never, never let others take responsibility for Srila Prabhupada's legacy away from you, and make a mess of it. You accept them taking it, not because you love Prabhupada, but because you want to escape responsibility. You want bliss, happiness, peace, without paying the price of intense devotional service. You want *moksa*, Little Prabhu, not eternal service to the Lord. And your Little Great Prabhus don't mind that you want *moksa*. They think it's great. Your wanting *moksa* means that they will have Prabhupada's legacy to mangle at will--whether they know this consciously or unconsciously doesn't matter, the result is the same.

We can only be destroyed from within. Specifically, we can only be destroyed if we insist on being Little Prabhus or Little Great Prabhus. Then we can be destroyed from within in two ways--individually and institutionally. The only thing needed for dysfunctionality to prevail is for good men to do nothing. This is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. . .

Afterword

Dear Prabhu:

For your records: It was in 1989 at the Vyaspuja of my spiritual master that I found myself deeply pondering my life, my 12 years in the movement. It struck me that I was not going anywhere. I felt annoyed and uncertain about what to do. At that time I thought of myself in these terms: "I am going no where. I feel like a dog chasing its own tail. I have not moved an inch in many years." I was feeling frustrated, as if a lot of time had been wasted, as if a significant portion of my life had not been properly utilized.

Many devotees feel this way, yet will not face that their lives are unfulfilling. Many blame themselves for failing to be more Krsna conscious. This is fine, but the society should share some of the responsibility to see that money and manpower are properly utilized in the devotional service of the Lord. "Properly utilized" means that the devotees are challenged to lead productive lives in a way that they grow as individuals, as empowered representatives of the *parampara*. It does not mean simply fulfilling institutional goals while becoming empty, weak, and even soft in the head, yet thinking that is the true spiritual experience.

Recall the discussion in the first chapter of the two ways of understanding "normal." (1) In the sense of being well-adapted to the social role we fulfill in the group and (2) In the sense of optimum growth and happiness for the individual. We emphasize the first when we should be constantly emphasizing the second, for it leads to independent thoughtfulness.

One who believes that meeting ISKCON's goals is automatically going to give us the goal of pure Krsna consciousness, *prema-bhakti* is mistaken. Bhakti is not that easy to get. Of course, representatives of the institution, themselves possessed by it, are not apt to point this out.

They prefer to propagate that agreeing with them is love for Prabhupada, and disagreeing with them, no matter how irrational they may be, is rejection of Srila Prabhupada. This is warped logic, to put it mildly, because it isn't necessarily a fact that when I disagree, even with the whole GBC body, that I'm against Prabhupada. Yet I've seen several times over the years that when a person takes a stand that does not favor the GBC, various GBC men say the person is "against Srila Prabhupada" equating themselves with Prabhupada. But on principle, the GBC has no right to demand blind following from anyone. Then in light of their erratic history and letting the society down several times over the years they should be a little more reticent to expect it.

Nevertheless, whatever rhetoric the society may employ to justify improperly utilizing devotees, we must not equate "being exploited" with "properly utilized." They are not the same. Just as deceiving others will impede our pure Krsna consciousness, so being deceived is also an impediment to pure Krsna consciousness. It is our responsibility to know the difference between being used in Krsna's service and being exploited in the International Society for Krsna Consciousness. Therefore Srila Prabhupada wrote many books to free us from doubt and delusion, enabling us to tell the difference between being exploited and being utilized in the mission of Lord Caitanya.

I wondered. But, of course, I consoled myself, that this frustration was itself the price I had to pay to advance in spiritual life, that this frustration of not achieving anything would mature into complete detachment from the material world, and that my feelings that I was not moving at all in Krsna consciousness was only apparent, for by not achieving anything in this life, I would have nothing to be attached to, and therefore at the end, surely, I will go to the spiritual world.

It is interesting to see how devotees understand Krsna consciousness differently. Here the author indicates an understanding that I've never understood by reading Prabhupada's books, yet by observing the attitudes behind the masks of many devotees, I can see that many devotees hold this view--that not having any ambition or project is an kind of precaution against attachment that will somehow "mature into complete detachment." Therefore they practice this process at half-sail. They have vested far more faith in hope, the great falsifier, than in good judgment. Another term for this type of hope is "the magic helper."

This writer is a person about to come awake from the magic helper conception of spiritual life. I know that he has succeeded wonderfully ever since relinquishing the magic helper paradigm and taking responsibility for his life. Unfortunately, as he mentions later on, not many devotees are ready to assume such responsibility and walk the road less traveled. We want a guru that will carry us rather than direct us.

He told me he actually never got this understanding from the books of Srila Prabhupada, but was forced to think in this way to console himself "to not give up the process." In other words, he felt he could not properly utilize himself in devotional service, and to somehow stay in the process he had no choice but to console himself with the above thought. The analysis stands, however, because it applies to many.

Another angle on our philosophy is simply understanding that "whereas I would have lived in this world pursuing some ambition for my selfish gratification, now I can do the same thing for Krsna and perfect my existence." After all, everything can be done for Krsna. This is a core principle in our philosophy. How powerful and wonderful it would be if our whole focus and enthusiasm in relationships would be to bring out the best in each other so it can all be offered to Krsna. We appreciate that our *svarupa* is servant. Therefore we must serve. And why should we serve at half-sail? We should serve to the very best of our capacity. We have certain abilities and inclinations, and if we apply these to the devotional service of the Lord in the proper attitude of service we are acting on the liberated platform as self-realized souls, because we are thoroughly, unshakably convinced that we are eternally the servant of Krsna. ISKCON's role is aid each person to finding this unique part of themselves--our natural and maximal capacity to make our contribution--and to facilitate us doing it. This is a far cry from the current approach of hammering square pegs into round holes in the name of surrender. Where is such an example in the *sastra* or in Prabhupada's practical dealings?

When we are properly guided to use our propensities in the service of Krsna, it is easy to quickly become so attached to devotional service, that one will never depart from the shelter of the *parampara* message. No mystical qualifications are required. This is the sort of person Srila Prabhupada was describing when he wrote in the Fourth Canto (*Bhag.* 4.28.51, purport):

In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by *vani* or *vapu*. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush of Vrndavana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty.

Most devotees consider association with the Lord by *vapu* more elevated than associating with Him by *vani*, but to one who has firm faith, there is no difference. Lord Caitanya says, therefore, *adarsanam*, "I may see Krsna, I may not see Krsna, but that makes no difference to me, for He is always my worshipful Lord, unconditionally." In other words, "I am Your servant, You are my master, so whatever You want to do, I accept. My only concern is that I

am engaged in Your service." This faith is what makes one a first-class Vaisnava, a *paramhamsa*, an *uttama-adhikari*, not mystical qualifications.

If someone says "Well, no one can verify this level of faith either." The response is that Lord Caitanya said that he will be able to preach with logic and argument supported by *sastra* on a level that sets him apart from other devotees. This also implies that said person will be rational, not irrational, in their dealings.

According to Lord Caitanya the three classes of devotees are determined not by mystical qualifications but by faith. Here Prabhupada is describing the person whose faith (resolve) is irrevocable. Our society should be organized around the cultivation of the individual up to this point. Then there will be little or no feelings of being improperly utilized.

Then, according to Srila Prabhupada's teachings and that of Bhaktivinoda Thakura, at yet another stage of progression, achieved by being absorbed in one's *sthayi-bhava* as the eternal servant of the Lord via the *parampara*, one is eligible for being trained as an apprentice to one of the eternal residents of the Lord's abode for one's eternal service. This stage may be facilitated by one's *diksa-guru* or another guru, by the arrangement of the Lord.

This is my example of the illusion of progressing out of illusion. I kept pushing myself for another couple of years, until I decided to take my life in my hands, to make my own decisions about what was the best service for me and where I should stay according to my capacity and resources. I think I did this move barely in time, before the panorama became completely dark. I thought: "Fourteen years have passed, I've changed the body twice. I have given my authorities plenty of time to train me, and look where I am. I better train myself!" I made this my only guiding principle: To be sure (or at least try to ascertain) that whatever I do is for the service of Krsna.

After hearing for years the disempowering rhetoric that we commonly spew--that we can't understand the mind of Srila Prabhupada, that we cannot trust our own thinking because we have four defects, that one has to blindly cooperate to please Srila Prabhupada, etc.--how many devotees are able to individuate and risk isolation from the herd, yet not fall victim to the lower modes of nature? Not very many. This author is rare. Many get either entangled in the web of dysfunctional dynamics or leave in a spirit of bitter regret for all those years that were not properly utilized.

Readers should note how difficult it is to tear oneself away from being possessed by the institution. Even as clear-headed and realistic as this author became after twelve years, it took him two more to take the situation in hand.

I think many, many devotees have had similar experiences, but unlike myself they are now completely disassociated from ISKCON, and from the practices of *sadhana-bhakti*, because although they were able to feel as deeply, they may have lacked a good philosophical basis, or as you would say, the courage to move out of the herd.

Having experienced what this author is talking about and dealt with devotees in states of this experience, I can affirm that the author is correct. Many devotees instinctively know that something is wrong with their lives in the Krsna consciousness movement, but they cannot get a grip on the situation. Many simply blame themselves for their predicament, which is true from the point of view that they are infected with the Little Prabhu mind rot.

But it is also the responsibility of the institution and the specifically that of one's guru, to cure one of the Little Prabhu syndrome, like Krsna cured Arjuna on the battlefield. To the extent that we have failed to administer such cure, we are also culpable for the doubt brought on by our failure. Then if the individual lacks a proper philosophical basis and is thus unable to distinguish between the pure *parampara* doctrine and the dysfunctional dynamics of our society, he or she is likely to abandon the process, all the while thinking that they and they only are the cause of the problem. And the "authorities" in ISKCON accept no responsibility for this outcome, because in war there must be casualties. Which is a barbarous mentality. Without a clear philosophical understanding one thinks that moving out of the herd is the same as giving up Prabhupada's shelter. There is no way for such a person to individuate and become self-reliant on this path. Some are so unclear that they repeatedly subject themselves to the brutal dysfunctional dynamics of the society, get burnt out, go away, and after some time try again, only to experience the same again and again, each time beating themselves up for their inability to surrender to Krsna, never realizing that it is impossible to surrender to Krsna in this unlivable way.

Persons who are possessed by the institution like to check others who may want to break out of herd consciousness with dire warnings. A favorite is quoting Prabhupada's saying that if one thinks he can be Krsna conscious outside of ISKCON he or she is living an hallucination. This statement is not absolute, however, because he also said the following:

Even if somebody does not go in one line with the rest of the godbrothers, he can remain separately, but it does not mean that he may disobey the principles that I have laid down. So long as one follows the principles he continues to be my disciple."

(Letter, Nov. 1975)

The next quote comes from a morning walk in Hawaii, February 3rd., 1975. It is long, but relevant, and it is interesting to follow Srila Prabhupada's line of thinking. He shows that he is not fanatical about his disciples being on the *sankirtana* party, although his questioners are obviously motivated to get some proclamation from him to control others. He also answers the question, Is progress faster in the temple? Prabhupada also emphasizes, by citing himself as an example, what is the essence of the guru disciple relationship.

By the end, he makes it clear that using the institution for "blind association" (blind following) is a waste of time, "a fool's paradise." In other words, if the members of the institution becomes alienated, the institution becomes useless from the point of view of fulfillment of its true function. An institution just for the sake of an institution is of no value to Srila Prabhupada:

Ramesvara: Srila Prabhupada, it seems unfortunate that if the devotees cannot live in the temples, then they have to work for some *karmi* just to support themselves, and then they do not have time to go on the *sankirtana* party. So it is such mercy to be on the *sankirtana* party. So it seems very unfortunate that they do not have the time.

Prabhupada: No, then they should live in the temple if they want to give service in the *sankirtana* party.

Ramesvara: We always try to encourage them to come back to the temple.

Prabhupada: Yes. If he does not join the *sankirtana* party, that does not mean his spiritual life is hampered. He has to follow the rules and regulation. He may not be able to join the *sankirtana* party, but he must follow the process, rules and regulation. That is wanted. And because he is living outside the

temple, therefore he will forget all rules and regulation and do whatever he likes--then it will ruin the whole thing.

Devotee (1): Srila Prabhupada, is it faster if one lives in the temple and goes on the *sankirtana* party. Is it faster?

Prabhupada: That depends on him. Even in the temple, if his mind is in a different subject matter, then how it will help him?

Bali Mardana: The temple authorities like to preach that anyone who's living outside the temple is going to hell.

Prabhupada: Generally.

Bali Mardana: But even devotees who are following. They like to preach that.

Prabhupada: No, that is not. That is not. Just like even in ordinary business, if you transact business in the stock association, you get good business. And outside the stock association you don't get. Because association is there, there are many purchaser and many seller. So if you have to sell, you get immediate purchaser. And if you have to purchase, there is immediate seller. Therefore the stock exchange is there. That is the way, that if we live together in the stock exchange of devotional service, then you can help me; I can help you. So our business will go on nicely. And outside the market, you can live three hundred miles away from the stock exchange. You will not get so many business. Like that.

Devotee (2): You'll miss the opportunities.

Prabhupada: Yes. Therefore it is helpful. If you want to do business, you must take the first opportunity, the greatest opportunity, do your business. That is intelligence. And if we think, "All right, I shall do slowly. In seven hundred lives I shall become perfect," that is another thing.

Bali Mardana: It is riskier to stay outside.

Prabhupada: Oh, yes. Otherwise why you are opening so many centers and making arrangement that "We shall provide you with shelter, with food. These are the facilities. You live here, do whatever is your capacity. Don't sleep, but work." This is our teaching. *Satam prasangat*, this is also, and Rupa Gosvami says, *sato vrtteh, sadhu-sange, sadbhir bhaktih prasidhyati*: "If you live with the association of *sadhu*, devotee, then it will be quickly fruitful." And if you live with these ordinary men, then whatever you have got will be finished very soon. There is another verse. It is said there that it is preferred to live within the cage surrounded by fire than to live with the nondevotees. It is preferred.

Bali Mardana: Or with those who are too much attached to women also.

Prabhupada: Yes. Nondevotee means too much attached to woman. That is the plain fact.

Yasodanandana: Also one time in Bombay you told this verse from *Caitanya-caritamrta*, *sadhu-sanga, sadhu-sanga*. . .

Prabhupada: *Sarva-sastre kaya, lava-matra sadhu-sange sarva-siddhi haya*.

For me, personally, I had the opportunity to talk with my spiritual master not more than ten times in my whole life, not more. It may be less than that. But I tried to follow his instruction, that's all, although I was a *grhastha*.

Bali Mardana: You are a much better student than us.

Prabhupada: So this is the process. That is the. . . You sing every day. *Guru-mukha-padma-vakya, cittete koriya aikya*. That is the process. Wherever you live, if you follow strictly the instruction of guru, then you remain perfect. But if we create, concoct ideas against the instruction of guru, then we are doomed, hell. *Yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado yasya prasadan na gatih kuto 'pi*.

There is no more shelter, finished. *Yasya prasadat*. If guru thinks that "This

person, I wanted to take him back to home, back to Godhead. Now he is going against me. He is not following," *aprasadat*, he is displeased, then everything is finished.

Bali Mardana: *Vaisnava-aparadha*.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Devotee (1): Srila Prabhupada, where does someone derive his authority. . .

Prabhupada: The guru is authority.

Devotee (1): No, I know, but for his actions other than just following the four regulative principles and chanting sixteen rounds. He does so many other things during the day. Where does he derive his authority if he's not, let's say, living in the temple?

Prabhupada: I do not follow. The authority is guru. You have accepted.

Bali Mardana: For everything.

Jayatirtha: Say I have some outside job, I'm living outside, but I'm not giving 50% of my income. So then that work that I'm doing, is it actually under the authority of the guru?

Prabhupada: Then you are not following the instruction of guru. That is plain fact.

Jayatirtha: So that means that whole activity during the day, working, that means I am not following the instruction of the guru. It's unauthorized activity.

Prabhupada: Yes. If you don't follow the instruction of guru, then you are fallen down immediately. That is the way. Otherwise why you sing, *yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado*. It is my duty to satisfy guru. Otherwise I am nowhere. So if you prefer to be nowhere, then you disobey as you like. But if you want to be steady in your position, then you have to follow strictly the instruction of guru.

Devotee (1): We can understand all of your instructions simply by reading your books.

Prabhupada: Yes. Anyway, follow the instruction. That is required. Follow the instruction. Wherever you remain, it doesn't matter. You are secure. Follow the instruction. Then you are secure anywhere. It doesn't matter. Just like I told you that I saw my Guru Maharaja not more than ten days in my life, but I followed his instruction. I was a *grhastha*, I never lived with the Matha, in the temple. It is practical. So many Godbrothers recommended that "He should be in charge in this Bombay temple, this, that, that..." Guru Maharaja said, "Yes, better he lives outside. That is good, and he will do what is needed in due course of time."

Devotees: Jaya! Haribol!

Prabhupada: He said like that. I could not understand at that time what does he expect. Of course, I knew that he wanted me to preach.

Yasodanandana: I think you have done this in grand style.

Devotees: Jaya, Prabhupada! Haribol!

Prabhupada: Yes, done grand style because I strictly follow the instruction of my Guru Maharaja, that's all. Otherwise I have no strength. I have not played any magic. Did I? Any gold manufacturing? (laughter) Still, I have got better disciples than the gold-manufacturing guru.

Yasodanandana: Before you came, many gurus came, but they did not make any pure devotee of Krsna.

Prabhupada: How they can? He is not pure devotee of Krsna. How he can do? *Krsna-sakti vina nahe nama pracara*: "Without being empowered by Krsna nobody can turn a person to become devotee of Krsna." Artificially, you

cannot make. He may make show of gold manufacturing, but he cannot make a devotee of Krsna. That is not possible.

Jayatirtha: So the purpose of having the Society is to show the devotees how they can always be twenty-four hours engaged according to your instruction.

Prabhupada: Yes, that is helping one another. If I am deficient, by seeing your example I shall correct myself. This is the idea, not that a fool's paradise: all fools and join together. Not like that. There should be ideal life, at least the leaders, the president, the GBC. They will show the example, and they (the mass of devotees) will follow. Then it is beneficial. And all of them are fools? Then it is fool's paradise. At least, in the blind association, at least if one man has got eyes, then he can lead all the blind men. But if all of them are blind, then it is fool's paradise. So somehow or other, we have got now a position. People likes us. So we should not spoil by personal sense gratification. That is my request. If we can maintain this institution rigidly according to the order, then many people will be benefited. By seeing our behavior, by character, they will become. *Apani acari prabhu jivera siksaya*. The leader should be ideal.

Just see how Prabhupada's answer to Jayatirtha's last question supports the central theme of this book--that with the wrong dynamics we are wasting our time, and keeping the right dynamics falls primarily on the leaders' shoulders. Prabhupada says: "If I am deficient, by seeing your example I shall correct myself. This is the idea, not that a fool's paradise: all fools and join together. Not like that. There should be ideal life, at least the leaders, the president, the GBC. They will show the example, and they will follow. Then it is beneficial."

If the example is unbeneficial, then we are living in a fool's paradise, using Prabhupada's name and that of Lord Caitanya as currency for wasting everybody's time in the illusion of progress out of illusion.

The purpose of the society is to properly utilize the talents and gifts of the devotees for the service of the mission of Lord Caitanya. The role of association is to help each other realize the fullness of each person's potential. Otherwise, "fool's paradise." Those awake to this danger must either address the problem or individuate from the herd and go on growing in Krsna consciousness, as the author of the message under discussion has done.

Another point discussed above is that if one does not follow the instruction of the guru, Prabhupada says, "fallen down immediately." We have a limited concept of falldown, as meaning the breaking of the regulative principles, but in reality there are many kinds of falldown. Some of them can be more heinous than breaking the principles in that hundreds or thousands of lives may be negatively affected by our fall down. Considering that, where do our dynamics leave us, especially the leaders?

The message concludes:

I want to offer you my most humble obeisances for producing this book, which gives our members the tools, the knowledge and the language to identify clearly the situation, and the courage to move ahead. Thank you. I say thank you many times, and this only after reading the first ten pages.

We should understand Srila Prabhupada's heart well enough to know that when all is said and done, what pleases him the most is to see us become *asammoha*, free from doubt and delusion, and develop our attitude of loving service to Krsna--an attitude that cannot be checked by any circumstance. Of course, all this understanding leads to us serving his desire. He had an elaborate vision for spreading Krsna consciousness, hence many aspects to that

vision, hence many desires; but his dearest desire is that we train devotees to be independent thinkers in the understanding of Krsna consciousness, and then let them preach according to their realization and conviction.

If this book is able to help the reader achieve such independent thinking, I consider my small attempt to serve Prabhupada a success. Naturally, it is encouraging when a devotee reacts like this after only ten pages. One feels a great surge of hope that the book will be successful, that somehow we will rout the Little Prabhu in all of us and then cooperate for Srila Prabhupada.