

International Society for Krsna Consciousness
Founder Acarya: A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
His Holiness Satsvarupa das Goswami
4719 Quail Lakes Drive, Suite G-159
Stockton, CA 95207 Satsvarupa_dasa_Goswami@hotmail.com

May 10, 2004

Dear disciples, friends, and family of devotees,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. I'm going to start by falling at your feet and asking for forgiveness for a mistake I committed a year and a half ago involving inappropriate dealings with a woman. I'll tell more about this later in the letter.

I want to thank you for all of the outpourings of love and support I am receiving in the many letters coming from god brothers, disciples, and friends. In this letter, I'm going to answer some of the questions that have been raised. You have been waiting too long for these answers. I will also continue to respond by letter to each of you. Let's start with the first question.

Question 1: Can you please explain what happened?

Answer 1: For the past twenty years, I have been contending with the dominant battle in my life – a painful and serious disease.

I've tried to treat this disease in a number of ways. For ten years I took no medicine of any kind, either herbal or allopathic, while receiving treatment from a naturopathic doctor. Naturopathy did not relieve me of my pain, nor did it make me better. It simply left me underweight and anemic. I won't bore you with the list of alternative medicines that I tried. From acupuncture to Ayurveda, I have tried them all. But there were no positive results. When I first started with allopathic treatments, I tried over-the-counter medicines and soon wound up with what are called rebound headaches, where the "cure" itself gives you headaches. I went to a doctor, who prescribed more sophisticated and expensive medicines, which gave me a few days off from the pain, but these too created rebound headaches.

It was despairing to live each day with constant and acute pain. Somehow, in the hours in between pain, I managed to write, including letters.

I even pursued a lot of traveling and visiting temples. Sometimes I would give a Srimad Bhagavatam class and

afterwards I would have to lie down in a van in my bed all day. Then I would give another Srimad Bhagavatam class the next day. Devotees didn't recognize symptoms of migraine and many still can't.

They didn't realize how sick I was. The travel and lecturing only exacerbated my condition. Finally, my health almost reached a complete breakdown. As some of you may remember, I was Guru and / or GBC manager for a geographic zone including Ireland, much of the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast United States, the Caribbean, Vancouver, and Gita-Nagari farm. Over time, the weight of this service began taking its toll on me until, with the illness, I was often confined to bed.

This occurred simultaneously with a crisis in the GBC itself and dissatisfaction within the members of the movement over the "zonal guru" designation.

At this time, I resigned from the GBC. I tried to keep traveling as a sannyasi even with the realization that travel worsened my headaches.

While many events in my life led to this condition, severe headaches were first triggered by my experiences as a manager and "zonal guru."

My work in ISKCON in these capacities involved doing kinds of services for which I was not well suited.

My psychophysical nature is more to be a poet and writer and lead a quiet life, not to be doing management and "quarreling" with god brothers – it hurt me to have to face my duties in this way.

Finally, I found a psychiatrist M.D., who accurately diagnosed me as suffering with anxiety disorder, the apparent cause of the migraines.

Additionally, when I worry that I'm going to get a headache, the worrying itself actually causes a migraine. This is called anticipatory anxiety syndrome. He prescribed that what we must do is stop the pain.

This became our priority. He said that the side effects of medicine were not as dangerous for me at the present moment as complications from chronic pain. At the same time, I should enter counseling and fully occupy myself with trying to improve my situation with this kind of health treatment. I began to try to balance my healthcare needs with my responsibilities to Prabhupada and my disciples. The choice of counselor did not work out. First of all, especially for a sannyasi, it's not ideal that the counselor and the client be of different sexes. Among devotees, however, there were not many counselors from which to choose. This person was recommended by a

close disciple and another devotee counselor because she had the same disease and had received treatment for it. In fact, she had not been formally trained as a counselor.

At first, we began working by exchanging correspondence. By telephone, she would give me different practices to do like breathing and listening to certain tapes that aid a person with my condition. Anxiety disorder is actually a widely prevalent disease in the United States, which affects millions of people. There was not too long ago a cover story about it in Time Magazine.

She recommended that we have person-to-person sessions, in which she could try to confront the anxiety disorder. At first, this work produced some good results. Unfortunately, a naturally occurring emotional attachment between the counselor and client was mishandled. As soon as we realized what was happening, we saw the danger of it — me being a sannyasi and she a married woman. We talked seriously and decided that we had to stop our counseling, and end our friendship, having no contact at all. I see no reason to go into further detail except to say that we did become physically intimate and this was wrong.

* Question 2: Why were you silent about the inappropriate action until it had been exposed?

Answer 2: We did not see the need for it since the relationship had been completely closed. My disciples and many others could suffer because of just one incident.

To broadcast it all over would simply cause more harm than good. Those who theorize about the truth and say that anything other than broadcasting is a "cover up" have a technical and theoretical definition of truth, which is not necessarily absolute.

I saw a higher morality in continuing on with my devotional service by working through this test on a daily basis in counseling, this time with a trained male devotee counselor. I felt I was rectifying the mistake within my relationship with Prabhupada and Krsna and that the greater good would be served by trying to protect my community of loved ones.

Question 3: Why did it take so long to hear from you after the news came out?

Answer 3: An anonymous letter was sent to the Sannyasa Minister, who began an investigation. Dissatisfied with the pace of the inquiry, the anonymous author posted his story on the Internet.

I had already responded to the Ministry as well as the GBC Executive Committee and they had asked that I not write my letter to my disciples in order for them to have time to conduct a proper inquiry. Out of respect for their request, I did not communicate with you directly at first. This accounts for why you didn't hear from me, why I was silent. You had to hear rumors about me while I could say nothing from my side. I had to wait for the GBC to come to their final conclusions and it took a long time. I was on pins and needles every day waiting. At the end, I felt I was again collapsing from the pressure that was building. I was waiting for it for myself and I was waiting for it for you. My hands were tied; I could not tell you.

(rest of letter lost...)