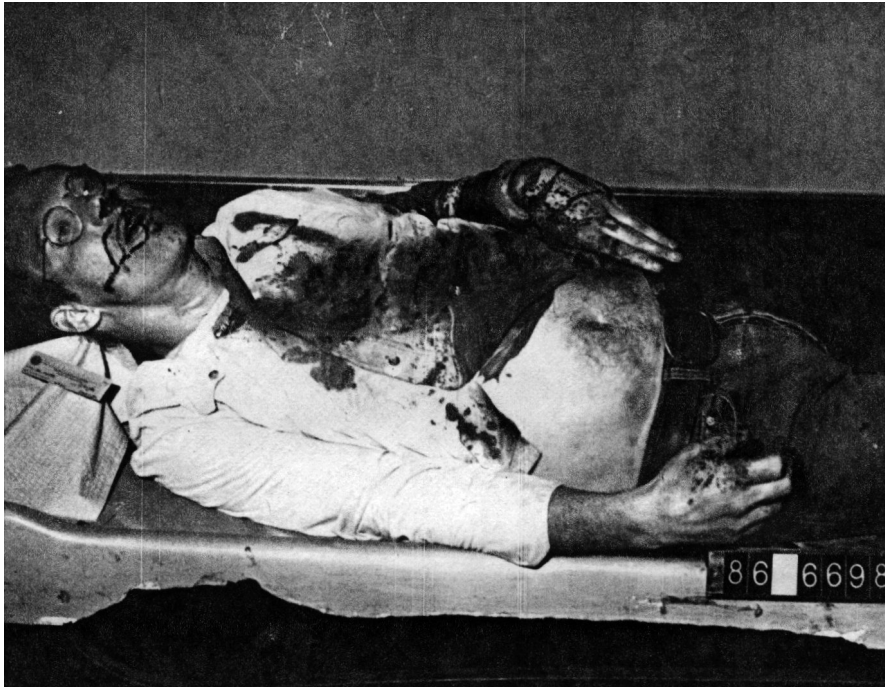


One chapter from Henry Doktorski's forthcoming book:
***Gold, Guns and God: Swami Bhaktipada and
the West Virginia Hare Krishnas***

© 2016 by Henry Doktorski



Government Exhibit 433: photograph of the body of Sulocana dasa

Chapter 63: The murder of Sulocana.

At approximately one a.m. Pacific time (four a.m. Eastern time) during the early-morning of Lord Nrsimhadeva's appearance day, Thursday, May 22, 1986, a decisive event occurred which inevitably and irrevocably changed the destiny of New Vrindaban: while the 33-year-old Sulocana sat rolling a joint¹ in his rusted 1976 Dodge van, maroon in color, parked at the intersection of Flint Avenue and Cardiff Street, a half-mile from the Los Angeles ISKCON temple,² his brains were blown apart by two bullets from a hand gun fired through the driver's-side window at close range.

The coroner reported: "Gunshot wound number one was to the left lower jaw region of the cheek, and it caused injury to the jaw bone, caused injury to a vessel of the carotid artery, and went through the cervical spine, that is, the spine in the neck region, and a bullet was recovered. There was injury to the spinal cord as a result of this gunshot wound. The second gunshot wound . . . also entered the face and the entrance was in a region just in front of the left ear. This gunshot wound went through the cheek region of the left side to a bone called the maxilla, went into the oral cavity and came out through

the right maxilla, the cheek bone, and exited, that is came out, in the right cheek region. . . . The bullet was recovered from the musculature behind and lateral to the neck spine on the right side. . . . Surrounding the entrance of gunshot wound number one there were multiple abrasions or scrapes in which there was some glass pieces.”³

News of the murder spreads quickly: New Vrindaban all a-buzz.

The news of Sulocana’s murder traveled fast: lightning fast. The murderer, Bhaktipada’s disciple Tirtha dasa (Thomas A. Drescher), made a speedy getaway from the Los Angeles temple vicinity to the airport, where he dumped his rental car and made a quick telephone call to New Vrindaban authorities while waiting for the next flight back east. He said, “I went to the airport, dropped off the vehicle, took the first flight out of Los Angeles . . . I guess about an hour and forty-five minutes later. It just happened to be going to Dallas.”⁴

That same morning at approximately seven thirty a.m. Pacific time, the Ugly Duckling Rent-A-Car agency received a telephone call from Tirtha informing them that he “had left the vehicle parked at one of the parking lots at Los Angeles International Airport, and that he had to leave unexpectedly and fly out.” An employee from the agency picked up the car about nine o’clock.⁵

During the japa period preceding the *mangala-aroti* morning program at New Vrindaban, hushed whispers of the news of Sulocana’s death brought great excitement to the devotees in attendance. The news couldn’t have taken longer than fifteen or twenty minutes to reach them after the murder was committed. The sankirtan leader, Dharmatma dasa (Dennis Gorrick), remembered:

It was the morning of Lord Nrsimhadeva’s appearance day. Nrsimha is a form of Krishna that protects the devotees. He is half-man, half-lion. When I came in [the temple room] in the morning everyone was very excited and jubilant and the whole temple was buzzing. Everyone was talking in little circles. It seemed to be a very upbeat mood in the morning. I asked someone, “What is going on?” because it was like a festive atmosphere. The devotee told me, “Haven’t you heard? Sulocana was killed in California last night!”

During the question and answer period after class [a couple days later], a devotee asked Bhaktipada, “How should we understand it when a demon is killed?” Bhaktipada responded that “A devotee isn’t disturbed when a snake is killed.”⁶

Some Brijabasis were surprised and shocked to hear the news of Sulocana’s murder. Yamuna dasi (Jane Rangeley Seward), Sulocana’s divorced wife, said, “I was extremely shocked. I hadn’t in the slightest expected that that could have happened.”⁷

Other devotees were pleased to hear the news. Ramacandra dasa, a New Vrindaban sankirtan picker, asked the most-senior New Vrindaban sannyasi, Radhanatha Swami (Richard Slavin): “Do you know who killed Sulocana?” Radhanatha replied: “I don’t know, but whoever it was, he was doing devotional service to Krishna.”⁸

Tapahpunja Swami (Terry Sheldon), at the time the Cleveland temple president, recalled, “When the news came that Sulocana had been killed, it came as a shock—and a relief—to everyone back in New Vrindaban.”⁹

Dharmatma continued his recollection of the day of the murder: “Later on after the morning functions, I had a discussion with [the New Vrindaban temple president] Kuladri

[Arthur Villa]. He was quite disturbed. He mentioned . . . how it shouldn't have been done like that. And that how Radhanatha, Hayagriva and Tapahpunja were pushing like crazy for this to happen, and how he had told them not to do it.”¹⁰

Janmastami dasa (John Sinkowski), a Bhaktipada disciple who had assisted Tirtha in January and February, searching for Sulocana in California, planned to return to California the next day, but since Sulocana was already “whacked,” his trip was cancelled. Jaya Sri Krishna, who had been contracted to do Janmastami's service in Philadelphia, went back to Washington D.C.¹¹

Los Angeles police were notified of the murder about 9:45 a.m. Pacific time when a pedestrian walked past the van, noticed the broken glass, glanced inside and called police.¹²

Tirtha in Ohio.

From Dallas, Tirtha caught a flight to Cleveland, Ohio, where he undoubtedly met his wife (Suzanne Bludeau—Suksmarupini devi dasi) and son (Tapas), and slept at their trailer park home in Ravenna, Ohio (about five miles east of Radhanatha Swami's preaching center in Kent), to catch up on his rest. The next day, Friday, May 23rd, Tirtha drove to Columbus, Ohio, and during the afternoon stopped in at the Festival of India sponsored by Ohio State University. The Columbus Hare Krishna temple had an exhibit at the festival. Tirtha chatted with the temple president Karusa dasa, Tapahpunja Swami and a visiting sannyasi from New Vrindaban, Varsana Maharaja, who were preaching at the festival.¹³

The most pressing thought on Tirtha's mind was getting the remainder of the \$8,000 he was promised by New Vrindaban authorities for “destroying the demon” Sulocana, and purchasing air tickets for himself and his family to leave the country.

Tapahpunja related, “The day after Tirtha pulled the trigger, he flew back to Cleveland and then drove to Columbus the next afternoon. I was preaching at Ohio State University's Festival of India. He told me the horrid details. I was actually the first to know. I shook my head in disbelief and asked him about his plans. Tirtha wanted to take his family and leave for India but not without the remainder of the money owed to him by Kirtanananda Swami. He was stuck and no one would talk to him.”¹⁴

From Columbus, Tirtha telephoned his friend, Randall Gorby, a long-time friend of New Vrindaban who lived in Bethany, West Virginia, and informed him: “I am in the Big ‘C’ and took care of everything in California and would like to talk to you.” The two friends met at the Dutch Pantry outside of Youngstown, Ohio, not far from Kent State University. Gorby said:

We started to talking and Tirtha said that he had flown to California, rented a motel and a car, and that he had made contact with Sulocana within a matter of three hours after arriving; that he had a person with him from the temple in Los Angeles [a Ramesvara disciple named Krishna-Katha dasa—Jeffrey Breier] and that he had trailed Sulocana. He said that he and the other fellow were in the automobile sitting behind Sulocana's van and that the other fellow had forgotten his weapon, or went away to get his weapon, and that Tirtha decided, “I might as well get this over with now.” And he climbed out of the car, walking up alongside of the van and shot Sulocana twice in the head.

He said, “Randy, do you remember a scene in the *Deer Hunter* [movie] where they were playing Russian roulette? The brains come out identically that way in slow motion.”¹⁵

Bhaktipada is notified of the murder.

When Sulocana was murdered on Lord Nrsimhadeva’s appearance day, Bhaktipada was returning from a European tour on a LTU (German Charter Airlines) flight from Frankfurt to New York City with Devamrita Swami and two teenage boys, Jayananda and Caitanya-Mangala. Bhaktipada heard the news of Sulocana’s murder after passing through customs at Kennedy International Airport.¹⁶

Madhava Ghosh picked up Bhaktipada and his entourage at the international terminal and transported them to the domestic terminal for their flight to Pittsburgh. Madhava Ghosh told Bhaktipada that “Bryant had been killed.”¹⁷

That evening, Kuladri greeted Bhaktipada and his entourage at Pittsburgh International Airport. Devamrita Swami recalled that Kuladri showed Bhaktipada “a newspaper article about Bryant’s death” and that Kuladri “acted pleased.”¹⁸

Tirtha told to go to India.

Tirtha was instructed to fly to India with his wife and young son where Bhaktipada’s wealthy disciple, Nathji dasa, would provide for their lodging. During a wiretapped telephone conversation with Randall Gorby, Tirtha explained, “This is extremely privileged information. They want me to go to India. That’s Number One’s plan. He has a disciple who’s a real wealthy man and he is going to instruct him first with a Telex that I’m arriving, so on and so forth. And then, when he [Bhaktipada] goes over there, supposedly next month, he will take him aside and explain the whole situation to him. . . . I’m going . . . with [my wife] Suzanne and [son] Tapas. . . . We’re supposed to go to New York today and get all that shit [passport and visa] together. You know, in New York you can do it all in a few days.”¹⁹

Tirtha’s wife was not keen about moving to India permanently. She explained, “I don’t think I’m ready for it. [I could go to India] to visit, but I know I couldn’t live there. . . . It’s hard to live there, I’ve heard.”²⁰

Backlash.

Sulocana’s murder prompted law enforcement agencies to treat his accusations against Bhaktipada seriously; perhaps, they suspected, Bhaktipada was responsible for Sulocana’s death. One police officer said: “Bryant was a martyr for his faith. He was one lone voice in the wilderness and he was killed because he talked about corruption. He went up against the heavyweights and he lost.”²¹

Sulocana’s attorney explained, “Bryant’s murder was the beginning of a long downhill slide for Swami Kirtanananda, mainly because it happened in California, beyond the reach of his millions. The two investigators assigned to it, Paul ‘The Stump’ Tippin, and Leroy Orozco, were experienced Los Angeles detectives who had worked on several high-profile murders. There would be no cover-up.”²²

Sergeant Westfall remembered, “Steve Bryant’s murder was a catalyst because it gave us [the local Marshall County police force] the chance to get the Federal government involved.”²³

Ravindra-Svarupa confirmed:

So all of a sudden Sulocana is passing around papers about the ISKCON game and stuff and everybody’s dismissing him as a nut until he was murdered. His stature increased immensely and his credibility in the eyes of the police. And they began an investigation into his murder.

And Tirtha, for some reason, left a wide trail leading back to him and New Vrindaban. The car he was using he had rented at the airport, using his photo ID and stuff like that. And so they quickly concluded that this was a professional hit and that New Vrindaban or Kirtanananda was behind it.

Because it started in West Virginia and happened in California, it went across State lines and so the Federal Government came in. The FBI investigated, they started to find out how New Vrindaban was making its money and all of a sudden there’s a prosecutor from the federal government justice department investigating New Vrindaban. . . .

The newspapers were just going to town about this whole thing. This reporter from the *San Jose Mercury News* named John Hubner wrote a two part series called “Crime and the Krishnas.” Starting with Kirtanananda . . . Hamsadutta had unburdened his soul to this reporter . . . and he also talked about Kirtanananda and what happened out there.²⁴

Even ISKCON leaders who were aware of the plot to murder Sulocana (early in 1986, Radhanatha Swami flew to Los Angeles and met with Ramesvara Maharaja, reportedly to discuss cooperation between the two temples to “destroy the demon”) began to distance themselves from New Vrindaban once the federal government became involved in the investigation. Janmastami confirmed: “Only after the murder had been committed did any of ISKCON’s leaders challenge the philosophy that prevailed at New Vrindaban at that time.”²⁵

Los Angeles ISKCON guru Ramesvara Swami, who once told his Ksatriya security-guard disciple Krishna-Katha that “Sulocana needs a new body,” now claimed that he and Sulocana were practically buddies. Ramesvara Swami insisted, “As far as I know, Sulocana didn’t have any bad feelings toward myself and similarly, I had no bad feeling toward him. He wasn’t disturbing us. He came and went very secretly. A number of our core members attended his funeral in Los Angeles; they wanted to show their sympathy and outrage.”²⁶

Mukunda Goswami, director of public affairs for ISKCON, said it was “absolutely absurd to think that our society would have anything to do with the man’s murder.”²⁷

Bhaktipada denied that he had anything to do with Sulocana’s murder and said that the fact that New Vrindaban was in the news did not concern him. He said: “I don’t care what they say about me as long as they say it. All I know is that more people than ever are coming to visit the Palace. Business is wonderful.” Regarding the murdered Sulocana, Bhaktipada said: “He had a lot of enemies. Mostly, he had the Lord as his enemy.”²⁸

Bhaktipada attempted to discredit Sulocana: “Who is Bryant? Even his parents admitted he was unstable. For years he wandered around lost; he beat his wife, abused his

children—he slowly became crazed, and his only objective in life was to tear down the authorities.”²⁹

Bhaktipada insisted: “An investigation will only show that we are what we say we are—religious people who have no other business than to serve God.”³⁰

Devotees cautioned not to speak to media or police.

Scarcely a week after Sulocana’s murder, one high-ranking ISKCON sannyasi who had come to live at the community a few months earlier—Devamrita Swami, a powerful preacher who had worked behind the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe under the direction of his sannyasa guru Harikesa Swami—wrote a feature article for the *New Vrindaban News* titled “A Word To The Wise Is Sufficient” which warned devotees to keep their mouths shut if questioned by the media or police. If anyone knew of any criminal activities, he said, they should report it not to the police nor to the media, but to the temple authorities, who would, it was implied, take whatever action they deemed appropriate. Devamrita Swami preached:

Life in the material world is constantly full of upheavals, and a fruitive worker never ceases his efforts to squeeze out some sense gratification, regardless of whether the situation is one of so-called happiness or so-called distress. Right now the media and some law enforcement officials are amusing themselves by harassing the New Vrindaban Community about the death of one great *vaisnava-apradhi* (offender) on the west coast.

The media and some police are clearly more interested in creating a sensationalistic atmosphere and profiting from it than in reporting truth or stopping violence. Therefore, if our devotees engage in wild rumors and gossip about the mundane affairs of LA street crime, they can actually help the karmis toward their sublime goal of an endless stream of “juicy” news to report and “suspicious” hearsay to interrogate innocent devotees about.

Naturally, if anyone ever has any factual knowledge of someone performing criminal acts, he should inform the temple authorities. Otherwise what is the use of exchanging who-dunit speculations about the illusory activities of the gross materialists? This is called *gramya-katha*, “town talk,” by Sri Jagadananda Pandit, who warns devotees against indulging in such stale topics

This is not the first time controversy has been stirred up against the community nor will it be the last. Whenever there is powerful preaching, maya always supplies resistance. Obviously, the best thing we can do both for ourselves and all other living entities is to absorb the consciousness in talks of devotional service, specifically how to sacrifice everything to build Srila Bhaktipada’s project.³¹

More articles warning devotees to keep quiet appeared in other New Vrindaban publications:

MAINTAIN THE PURITY. . . . Srila Bhaktipada has stated that he does not know of any illegal activities in New Vrindaban and he flatly disapproves of such things. Any devotee who may know of illegal activities in New Vrindaban is requested to report them to the community administration. Srila Bhaktipada has also requested that devotees refrain from indulging in idle gossip and rumor-mongering about individuals and issues, and that they maintain the purity of New Vrindaban by speaking of the nectarian pastimes Lord Krishna and His devotees.³²

BE CAREFUL WHO YOU TALK TO, PRABHUS—. . . This is a warning to devotees not to talk about these allegations with any unknown men or women who suddenly appear in our community. Although we have nothing to hide, there are those who will distort even the simplest truths. Also, remember that there is an organized conspiracy to destroy this community, and demons can come in many disguises. Putana [the witch] came as a lovely lady and fooled the residents of Vrindaban, but she came to kill Krishna. The devotee has to be just as desirous to protect Krishna as the demons are to destroy Him. Then the devotee is always victorious. The U. S. Navy has a tagline: Loose lips sink ships.³³

Kuladri confirmed that New Vrindaban policy was not to cooperate with the police. Kuladri said, “This was a continuous policy that Swami recommended: no devotee talk with the police, and he was continually portraying the police as persecutors and demoniac. He said they were not interested in the religious goals of the community, and they were simply hinderances and would stop it [New Vrindaban] if they could, and any problems in the community he always made an effort to hide them from the police.”³⁴

Escape money denied to Tirtha.

Tirtha had successfully executed the community’s objective, but he still had to make his escape: he desperately needed to leave the country until things cooled down. But he didn’t have enough money to purchase plane tickets for himself and his family. New Vrindaban still hadn’t delivered him in full the promised amount of \$8,000, but for some reason, the community was dragging its feet; the money was not forthcoming.

Tirtha explained, “He [Tapahpunja] said that half the devotees in New Vrindaban were talking that it was me that did it. So that’s why they want to move me on out. . . . I would feel a lot more assured if I could meet with Bhaktipada himself just briefly and he just said, “Just do like this and do like that.” I would feel confident then that I was doing the right thing. . . . I could try to do that [meet with Bhaktipada] but I’m not sure he would even talk to me now. I think the Iron Curtain dropped out there. I think they’re covering with both hands again.”³⁵

Tirtha had no money himself, in fact, according to Tapahpunja Swami, he was in debt. Tapahpunja described Tirtha’s financial straits during an interview with a private investigator, who explained:

Drescher told Sheldon that he was financially destitute. Drescher had moved his family into a run down mobile home near Ravenna, Ohio. His credit rating was so bad that he had needed someone to use their name to have a phone installed and the electricity turned on. At this meeting he again offered to sell his Isuzu in order to continue living. Sheldon said that he chastised him for his foolhardy spending habits and admonished that unless he made a wholesale change in his life he was a burden to deal with.³⁶

Tirtha called his friend Randall Gorby on the phone and complained that New Vrindaban was not following through with their promise to pay him \$8,000 for his expenses in eliminating Sulocana. Tirtha explained, “I called him because I needed help and he has always been a close friend to me, but little did I know.” Tirtha did not realize that, with Gorby’s permission, State Police had put a wiretap on Gorby’s telephone and recorded the call from Tirtha. Gorby had become a government informer.

Gorby: Do you have a place to go?

Tirtha: Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Gorby: Well, I'd really get on 'em. I can't understand them not coming through with it.

Tirtha: It's just ridiculous because they've got a hundred thousand [dollars] coming in every week.

Gorby: What agreement did you make with. . .

Tirtha: Well, it's just that eight figure [\$8,000].

Gorby: Yeah.

Tirtha: I mean it was just like they, a . . . liked it. They actually thought that was a bargain basement price and they were all happy with it.

Gorby: Yeah.

Tirtha: It was a bargain fuckin' basement. I mean you couldn't go any lower than that. . . . But I don't think he's setting me up. I really don't think Bhaktipada's trying to set me up. That's who Tapahpunja was with.

Gorby: Oh.

Tirtha: He was with him for ten straight hours.

Gorby: And Dharmatma gave him? Had the money?

Tirtha: No. He got it right out of his hand.

Gorby: Oh, from Bhaktipada?

Tirtha: That's right. He counted it out personally.

Gorby: Well why the hell didn't he give you the full amount, Tom?

Tirtha: I don't know.³⁷

On behalf of Tirtha, Gorby telephoned Hayagriva. The wiretap transcript recorded:

Gorby: Hello, is Howard there please?

Purnamasi: Yes.

Hayagriva: Hello.

Gorby: Hello, Howard. I just talked to Tom. He's impatient.

Hayagriva: Well, I can't discuss this on the phone.

Gorby: Okay, well whatever you decide.

Hayagriva's wife-at-the-time, Purnamasi devi dasi, recalled, "We get a phone call. Gorby asks Hayagriva for some money because Tirtha needs money. Tirtha threatens my family and tells Hayagriva if he wants to see his family again, he'd better cooperate."³⁸

As explained earlier, the day after the murder, Tirtha drove to the Festival of India in Columbus, Ohio, to speak to Tapahpunja to get his money. Tirtha said, "I was previously promised that in the event I needed to leave [the country] there would be money available, so I explained the situation to Tapahpunja. I called Dharmatma myself to ask him for some money."³⁹

Dharmatma refused to give Tirtha any more money. He explained:

Tirtha called me on the phone and asked me if I had any more money for him. I said, “No. I didn’t know anything about any more money.” He said, “Well, there is supposed to be some more money for me. Talk to ‘Number One’ [Bhaktipada], and I will get back to you.”

When Tirtha called back, first of all, he asked if I had talked to ‘Number One.’ And at this point I was really freaked out because the murder happened and I knew that I had given him twenty-five hundred dollars [for his California trip], so I realized somehow I was implicated and I was very frightened. So I told him, “Well, no. I looked for him but I couldn’t find him,” when in fact I had not really looked for him. I didn’t want to involve myself anymore.

Tirtha got very angry at that and said, “You both, you are bull shitting me.” I said, “No, no, you know how he is. He is hard to find. Sometimes I can’t find him.”

And then Tirtha got very angry and he started swearing, and saying this is just fucking me around, they are just screwing around with me. Bhaktipada always screws me around. I am supposed to have more money. I got to leave the country. I did the job, you know. I need my money.” He kept yelling and screaming.⁴⁰

Tirtha was upset and Tapahpunja was depressed that New Vrindaban had not providing escape money to Tirtha. Tirtha explained to Randall Gorby:

Tirtha: I’m packed and ready to fucking go. . . . I’m leaving here [Kent, Ohio] tonight, and I won’t come back here. We didn’t like the place anyways, so it’s no great loss.

Gorby: How are you going to stay in touch with them?

Tirtha I’ll just have to call. I’m going to call up Dharmatma now and say, “What’s going on?” and if they haven’t done anything, I’ll just scare them a lot and say, “Well, I’m coming in, I’m coming in to the festival and I’m going to get this straightened out.” That should work, right? I’ll say, “Either you come to me, or I’m coming to you.” I’m just going to tell them, what the hell.⁴¹

Randall Gorby met with Hayagriva at New Vrindaban on Sunday, May 25, to inquire about the balance from the \$8,000 agreement which was due to Tirtha. An investigator noted, “Gorby stated that he had met Howard Wheeler on Sunday, May 25th, regarding Drescher’s request that he get \$8,000 from Wheeler in order to leave the country. Gorby asked Wheeler how they were going to get the money to Drescher and Wheeler had told him that they would do it through the normal procedure and they were trying to set up the delivery.”⁴²

Tapahpunja comes to New Vrindaban to lobby for escape money.

Tapahpunja also needed to leave the country along with Tirtha and was disturbed about the unavailability of escape money. Tapahpunja met personally with Bhaktipada in order to convince him of the gravity of the situation. Surely he would authorize the release of funds. Tirtha explained, “He [Tapahpunja] drove to the New Vrindaban Community and had a private meeting with Kirtanananda.”⁴³

Tapahpunja recalled, “Most of us who were trying to keep tabs on Sulocana’s whereabouts were unaware that Kirtanananda had offered \$7,500 to Tirtha. Tirtha’s

decision to fly to Los Angeles was an independent act, partially financed by Kirtanananda's \$7,500 bidding. . . . In his typical miserly manner, Kirtanananda Swami had only given Tirtha a portion of the \$7,500. I tried to secure the rest of the money and drive Tirtha and family to La Guardia.”⁴⁴ (The actual amount promised was \$8,000.)

Tapahpunja arrived at New Vrindaban and first visited the sankirtan house. Dharmatma explained:

A few days after the murder, Tapahpunja arrived at my house, which was also the sankirtan department, and he was getting things out of my garage. In the garage there were lockers that a lot of the sankirtan devotees kept their personal belongings and different things. . . . He had camouflage pants on, an army shirt on, black boots. . . .

And we got into a discussion about the circumstances of the murder. He was saying “Wasn't it neat that it happened on Lord Nrsimhadeva's appearance day! It was very auspicious, very wonderful that a demon was killed on this particular day!”

And then he went on to describe to me in detail how it happened. He said, “You should have heard how it happened. It was real neat.” And he proceeded to tell me how Tirtha approached the van from the driver's side and came up to the window where Sulocana was sitting, and he told me that he was rolling a joint with his head down and Tirtha shot him twice with a .45. And he proceeded to say his brains were splattered all over the ceiling [of the van].

Then Tapahpunja said things were getting very hot; they had to leave the country. He said he was there [at New Vrindaban] to get money for himself and Tirtha to get out of the country. I told him he should talk to ‘Number One’ about the money.⁴⁵

Tapahpunja pleads with Bhaktipada for escape money.

Tapahpunja Swami approached Bhaktipada for “traveling expenses” and Bhaktipada at first refused to give any more money. Tapahpunja remembered:

I was in Columbus when suddenly Tirtha showed up and told me, “The tripe is gone.”⁴⁶

I asked, “What are you gonna do?” Tirtha replied, “I dunno. Kirtanananda hasn't finished paying me. He gave me some expense money, but he still owes me a lot. I've been calling New Vrindaban, Dharmatma, Kuladri and Dulal [Candra, the New Vrindaban comptroller] to get my money, but they just give me the run-around.”

Realizing the seriousness of the situation, I drove immediately to New Vrindaban and spoke personally to Kuladri, and then with Bhaktipada. Kirtanananda said, “I don't want to hear about it.” I countered, “I think you should listen to me; this has serious implications for New Vrindaban. Tirtha wants the rest of the money; he needs to leave the country immediately.”

But Bhaktipada didn't want to pay up. He argued, “Tirtha still owes us \$700 for his kid's tuition at the gurukula.” So Bhaktipada gave me the title of a car supposedly worth \$20,000.⁴⁷

Kuladri collaborated: “Bhaktipada and Tapahpunja were in Bhaktipada's land cruiser, and they were speaking. And as I walked up to the land cruiser, I heard them talking, and I overheard two statements. Bhaktipada said, ‘Disciples should not ask their spiritual master for money,’ and ‘I am not going to give Tirtha any more money.’”⁴⁸

Tirtha couldn't believe it when he heard about it later. He explained: "The part about owing Kirtanananda some \$700 for tuition is amazing. I remember his asserting that. My wife and I gave him \$500 on one occasion and he said, 'Okay, that's your donation as a disciple; now where's the tuition?' I was floored. I didn't even have a kid gurukula age."⁴⁹

Janmastami noted: "Their plan never went any further than doing the deed. They forgot about making the safe escape afterwards."⁵⁰

Tapahpunja continued, "Tirtha tried asking every conceivable New Vrindaban manager to 'get his money,' but no one would even answer his calls. He was, to put it lightly, radioactive. He was really angry and feeling betrayed. I was in contact with him via phone. Without saying anything to anyone, I drove directly to Kirtanananda Swami's ashram. He reluctantly handed me \$3,000. (The details of our discussion would make fantastic reading). I immediately delivered the money to Tirtha who was hiding out in Ravenna, Ohio."⁵¹

Bhaktipada incompetent to lead.

The dilemma of murderer Tirtha and conspirator Tapahpunja trying desperately to get sufficient cash to make their escape from the country when New Vrindaban sankirtan pickers were collecting \$100,000 each week defies the imagination. It is completely beyond belief. Why wasn't the money forthcoming? Didn't Bhaktipada realize the seriousness of the situation and the necessity for quick action?

Although there are several possible reasons for this gross neglect,⁵² the simplest explanation is that after Bhaktipada's head injury his memory had degenerated to such an extent that he had actually promised the money, but later forgot all about it. Bhaktipada's personal servant, Caitanya-Mangala, who had devised a secret system of facial expressions and spoken words to help Bhaktipada remember when he became forgetful, was unable to remind him of these previous commitments because he was asked to leave the room when confidential matters were discussed. Caitanya-Mangala knew nothing of the conspiracy to murder Sulocana. Bhaktipada was on his own, and afflicted with anterograde amnesia.

Tapahpunja claims money was intended to purchase plane tickets to India.

Tapahpunja finally convinced Bhaktipada to pay Tirtha the balance of the promised "expense" money. Tapahpunja remembered:

I pleaded, "But Bhaktipada, Tirtha needs to leave the country right away. Give me the money so he can buy a plane ticket for him and his wife and son."⁵³

But Bhaktipada did not have enough money in his personal safe. He normally only kept between \$500 and \$1000 at home. They thought of Dharmatma, the sankirtan leader. Dharmatma's "pickers" often brought home \$100,000 per week. Certainly, Dharmatma would have the money.

Bhaktipada drove his land cruiser to the sankirtan house, in the company of Radhanatha Swami, who had undoubtedly helped Tapahpunja convince Bhaktipada to surrender the escape money for Tirtha. In fact, it is unlikely that Tapahpunja could have convinced

Bhaktipada without Radhanatha's help; as Bhaktipada thought little of Tapahpunja, and often publicly derided him. Yes, Bhaktipada also publicly derided Radhanatha Swami, and called him "useless," but Radhanatha was, after all, the senior sannyasi, and was more respected as a saintly preacher by the Brijabasis.

In any case, we know with certainty that Radhanatha Swami accompanied Bhaktipada to Dharmatma's house. Why did Radhanatha Swami accompany Bhaktipada? Is it possible that Radhanatha was aware of Bhaktipada's condition of anterograde amnesia, and he insisted on accompanying Bhaktipada to make sure he didn't forget why he was going to the sankirtan house? Dharmatma recalled:

The next day [after the murder] Bhaktipada, along with Radhanatha, drove up in my driveway in Bhaktipada's vehicle and tooted the horn for me to come outside. When I came to the car we engaged in some small talk, I don't remember what. And then Bhaktipada asked me if I had six thousand dollars cash in the house. And I said, "I don't know. I will see if you want." He told me to go in and see if I had six thousand dollars.

I went in the house and went into my safe and . . . I counted out six thousand dollars and brought it out to him, and handed it in through the window. I don't remember if I gave it to Radhanatha and he passed it to Bhaktipada, or I gave it directly to Bhaktipada.

The mood was a little bit strained, and I said, "What is this? So they [Tirtha and Tapahpunja] can get out of the country?" And Bhaktipada and Radhanatha smiled and nodded their heads: "Yes." And then they said, "Hey, we've got to go," and they left.⁵⁴

Bhaktipada claimed that Dharmatma handed the money directly to Radhanatha and he "never looked at it." Bhaktipada recalled, "I remembered going with Radhanatha to Dharmatma's house. I don't remember how much money we got. I remember Dharmatma came out with a bag of money. He gave it to Radhanatha, and I never looked at it."⁵⁵

After receiving the bag of money from Dharmatma, Bhaktipada and Radhanatha Swami returned to Bhaktipada's house, where Bhaktipada personally counted the money. During a conversation with the author years later, Tapahpunja tried to make it sound like Bhaktipada had the money in his safe, apparently to bewilder the author and keep Radhanatha Swami's involvement secret. Tapahpunja explained:

Bhaktipada called over his servant, Kumara, told him to open the safe [in his house] and count out \$3,000 in cash. Kumara pulled out bags of money and counted it out, mostly five and one dollar bills. Then Bhaktipada counted it also, note by note. He told me that Tirtha could stay with Nathji dasa in Bombay. I wrote his instructions down in a little notebook I carried in my pocket. Then I returned to Kent, Ohio, to help Tirtha get out of the country.⁵⁶

Janmastami presented his version of how the escape money was acquired, and that Radhanatha personally delivered it to Tirtha in Kent, Ohio:

Tirtha flew back to Ohio from Los Angeles and Tapahpunja Swami picked him up at the airport and took him to Radhanatha's preaching center—his 'loft' in Kent, Ohio. After two days of muddled attempts, through Hayagriva, to get Dharmatma to turn over some cash it became necessary to inform Kirtanananda Swami that they needed getaway money. The rift between Dharmatma and Kuladri was so great that not even Radhanatha could bridge it in Kirtanananda Swami's absence. It became necessary to inform Kirtanananda Swami of the situation and the escape money needed.

Kirtanananda Swami became aware, authorized the expenditure, and called Dharmatma to arrange for ‘a package’ that Radhanatha would pick up. Radhanatha delivered it to Kirtanananda Swami, who counted it, putting his fingerprints all over it, which later proved to be his downfall. Then Radhanatha transported the money to the Kent temple, and then the FBI sprung their trap.⁵⁷

It seems that Janmastami was not aware that both Radhanatha and Tapahpunja delivered Tirtha’s escape money. Kuladri later confirmed that, after getting the cash, both Radhanatha and Tapahpunja Swamis left New Vrindaban together and drove to Ohio. Kuladri said, “Terry Sheldon, yes, he left with Radhanatha Swami and headed for Ohio to one of the preaching centers.”⁵⁸

Bhaktipada claims money was for a loan for a vehicle purchase.

After Tirtha was arrested and the money was confiscated, police investigators discovered Bhaktipada’s fingerprints on the bills. Kirtanananda presented his alibi in an interview published in the *Brijabasi Spirit* and titled “A Pure Devotee Faces A Fallen Nation.”

Dave Fitzgerald: But police say that Mr. Drescher [Tirtha], when arrested in Ohio, was found with \$4,000 in cash, some of which had your fingerprints on it.

Bhaktipada: Yes, but there’s also a very logical explanation for it. The president of the Cleveland temple had just bought a vehicle from him, for which the Cleveland temple had borrowed \$3,000 from me to purchase it. I did not know where they were buying the vehicle, but even if I had, I had no reason to think that it was not proper.⁵⁹

Mahabuddhi dasa (Donald Ferry), the accounts payable manager at New Vrindaban, thought it “odd” that Bhaktipada would give a \$3,000 loan for a car. An FBI investigation report stated, “Ferry was asked if it was normal for Bhaktipada to give a \$3,000 loan to a devotee to purchase a vehicle. Ferry stated that Bhaktipada had cash, usually between \$500 and \$1,000 but never \$3,000. Ferry thought it would be extremely odd for Bhaktipada to give a \$3,000 loan for a car.”⁶⁰

Radhanatha claims money used for Tapahpunja’s bail.

Three years later, Radhanatha Swami presented his version of the money story, “I usually spend most of my time in India and I was not aware of what Sulocana was doing in regards to New Vrindaban. I was at New Vrindaban on the day that Tirtha was arrested with Tapahpunja in Kent, Ohio. Devotees from Kent called and informed us that they were in jail. I called Kirtanananda and asked him if we should bail out Tapahpunja. It was agreed that we should bail out Tapahpunja because of his position at the Cleveland temple. I rode with Kirtanananda Swami to Dharmatma’s house and picked up a brown paper bag that contained an unknown amount of money. I was then directed to drive to the Cleveland temple and place the money in the safe. I did deposit the money and returned to New Vrindaban two days later.”⁶¹

Twenty years later, Radhanatha Swami,⁶² and the GBC representative for New Vrindaban (Malati dasi)⁶³ again claimed that the purpose of this money was not to get Tirtha and Tapahpunja out of the country after the murder, nor to purchase a vehicle for the Cleveland temple, but to bail Tapahpunja out of jail. Both Radhanatha and Malati claimed that Dharmatma was “confused.”

However, Dharmatma was unequivocal about the actual timeline of events, and responded:

Actually, there was nothing for me to be confused about. As per my testimony under oath, Kirtanananda and Radhanatha Maharaja drove into the driveway of the sankirtan house and honked the horn. When I approached the car I was asked if I had \$5,000.00 in the safe. I went in, retrieved it, and handed it to Radhanatha Maharaja, who handed it to Kirtanananda. I asked if this was to get them out of the country. I received affirmative smiles in response. *Bas*, that was it!

The same or next day, Tapahpunja prabhu showed up and cleared out the locker he had at the sankirtan house. Within a few more days, Tirtha, his wife Suksmarupini and kids, and Tapahpunja prabhu were surrounded and arrested, I believe in Kent, Ohio. Laksmi was confiscated from them that bore the fingerprints of Kirtanananda, as per the court testimony.

There was no way that the money was given to Kirtanananda after Tirtha and Tapahpunja were arrested in Ohio. ⁶⁴

Bhaktipada, Radhanatha, Tapahpunja and Dharmatma all had different versions of the money story. Which one appears to be the most probable explanation? Let us first examine Radhanatha Swami's statement, "I usually spend most of my time in India and I was not aware of what Sulocana was doing in regards to New Vrindaban." (We will examine Radhanatha's statement about the bail money later, on page 15.)

Not true: Radhanatha did not visit India very often in the early 1980s. Yes, he visited more than other New Vrindaban residents, but he was a sannyasi, and sannyasis are supposed to travel and preach. Factually, during the early 1980s, as I recall, Radhanatha spent most of his time maintaining his many preaching centers and college cooking classes in Ohio and West Virginia. That was his big preaching at the time.

It was only *after* Sulocana's murder and the arrest of Tirtha, when Radhanatha spent most of his time in India, only visiting New Vrindaban a few times a year. (This will be further discussed later in this chapter on page 21.) He essentially abandoned his preaching centers and cooking classes. If you can find them, ask the people who took over Radhanatha's centers: Jagadananda in Cincinnati, Nrsimha-Guru in Athens, Tappanacarya in Morgantown, and, as I recall, Krishna-Katha in Kent.

Tirtha and Tapahpunja arrested.

Five days after Sulocana's murder, at 11:55 a.m. on May 27th, Tirtha and Tapahpunja were arrested in Kent, Ohio. The warrant for Tirtha's arrest, however, was issued by West Virginia authorities in connection with the unsolved disappearance in 1983 of another New Vrindaban devotee, Cakradhari dasa. Kent Police officer Ronald Piatt and his partner said that when they arrested Tirtha, they found on him eleven "surveillance notes" describing Sulocana's van, his physical appearance and his movements in Los Angeles. Tirtha also carried \$4,261 in cash.

Tapahpunja Swami was with Tirtha when he was arrested, and had clippings from three newspapers about the death of Sulocana and written instructions of unknown origin saying that if Tirtha were ever wanted by the police, he should be sent to a temple in New York, then flown to India, where he should go to the Juhu temple and contact Nathji. At

the time of his arrest, Tirtha's car was packed with clothing and other goods, and his rented mobile home was found nearly empty. "We think he was in the process of activating those plans [to leave the country]," Piatt said.⁶⁵

Tapahpunja Swami remembered the arrest, and his subsequent bail bond which Radhanatha Swami brought from New Vrindaban:

We [Tirtha and I] were arrested in a bank parking lot in Kent. We had stopped there to change the wad of small bills [which Bhaktipada gave me] into bigger bills more fit for travel. I was held in the local Kent jail on a bogus charge, carrying a concealed weapon (a Barlow pocket knife).

The Cleveland devotees got in touch with Radhanatha Swami to arrange for bail money, approximately \$7,500 cash. There is nothing unusual about being released on a cash bail. I instructed the devotees to ask Maharaja for the bail.

It so happened that Radhanatha Swami was traveling to Oberlin, Ohio, for a regularly scheduled cooking class. He and Kirtanananda Swami drove to Dharmatma's house and Dharmatma handed over my bail money. Radhanatha Swami delivered the funds to the Cleveland devotees as planned and I was bailed out.⁶⁶

Based on the testimony of Tapahpunja and Dharmatma, now it becomes clear that Radhanatha Swami was involved in *two* money transfers: (1) going with Bhaktipada to the sankirtan house soon after the murder to get money for Tirtha to purchase air tickets to India, and (2) delivering the bail money from an unidentified source (probably the accounting office) to get Tapahpunja out of jail about five days later.

Knowing this, we can examine in more detail Radhanatha Swami's claim that he went to Dharmatma's house to get bail money for Tapahpunja. However, in Radhanatha's statement quoted earlier on page 13, Radhanatha is trying to confuse the issue. He forgets to mention that he received money on two occasions: first to get money from Dharmatma to deliver to Tirtha in Ohio for his escape, and second, about five days later, to deliver money to Ohio to bail out Tapahpunja. He is trying to make us think he only received money once: from Dharmatma five days after the murder for Tapahpunja's bail. Dharmatma, however, clearly remembers Radhanatha coming with Bhaktipada only one or two days after the murder.

Who should we believe? Who has the most to lose if the truth becomes widely known? Dharmatma explained, "Radhanatha Swami won't like all this coming out. Too bad. I had to be responsible for my transgressions [and go to prison]. He should do the same."⁶⁷

Kuladri in anxiety.

When news of Tirtha and Tapahpunja's arrest reached New Vrindaban, Kuladri left in great anxiety and visited Adwaita in New York City. An investigative report in the New Vrindaban archive reported, "May 1986: Devananda witnessed Villa's response when news of Bryant's murder surfaced. Villa was very jittery. He booked a flight on People's Airlines and flew off to New York City to see Adwaita."⁶⁸

Adwaita recalled, "Kuladri flipped out after Tapahpunja and Tirtha were arrested. . . . On the night [they] were arrested, Kuladri left New Vrindaban in a bit of anxiety and stopped by my place in New York for a day or two."^{69 70}

Janmastami collaborated: “Kuladri was VERY, VERY frightened by the time it was coming to ‘reaction time’ because he knew that he and Radhanatha were in very deep doo-doo.”⁷¹

Tirtha was extremely careless about leaving no trails for law enforcement agents to track. The investigators would find many clues. Janmastami claimed, “Tirtha left a trail as wide as a twelve-lane highway, and as the Los Angeles homicide detective Tippin said, ‘this was a professional hit; it just wasn’t professionally done.’”⁷²

Tapahpunja flees the U. S.

Tapahpunja Swami was held for three days on a charge of carrying a concealed weapon—a hooked-blade utility knife—but the charge was dismissed. Soon after, Tapahpunja disappeared for three years. He first flew to Ireland where he tried to hide at the ISKCON temple on Inis Rath Island, wearing a white dhoti and going by the name “Ganga dasa.” Eventually the temple president’s wife recognized him and her husband asked him if his presence there had anything to do with the murder of Sulocana. Tapahpunja boasted: “I engineered it.”⁷³

Tapahpunja recalled, “The comments I made to Prthu dasa about ‘engineering’ were in reference to Sulocana’s arrest by Bordenkircher in Marshall County. I was referring to the initial clever surveillance by which Sulocana was apprehended by Marshall County deputies.”⁷⁴

The Inis Rath Island temple president, Prthu dasa (Peter Brinkman), ordered Tapahpunja to leave, and Tapahpunja first went to Australia, and later to India and Malaysia, where he went by the name “Kuruksetra dasa.” He was finally apprehended on June 14th, 1990 in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur by U. S. marshals from Hawaii.⁷⁵

Tirtha allegedly offered deal.

During Tirtha’s first three days in jail, he claimed at least six Federal agents plus the Marshall County Sheriff allegedly offered him a deal: if he implicated the Swami and the other conspirators of the murder plot, he would get a greatly reduced sentence (if not total immunity), and his wife and children would be enrolled in the Federal Witness Protection Program. His family would be taken care of and Tirtha could join them safely and anonymously after he was released from prison. The New Vrindaban article titled “Get the Swami” elaborated:

“[Umapati Swami], a priest for Thomas Drescher, said that Drescher confided in him that for three days in June, 1986, immediately after his arrest, at least six agents attempted to make him say something false against Bhaktipada. The sheriff told him, “We’ll have you and we’ll get all the others too. Once we are able to get the Swami, the rest of ‘em will fall like dominoes.”

“Their threats, their desperate and adamant mood was disgusting,” related Drescher. “They offered me total immunity if I would put Swami Bhaktipada behind bars.”

“We know you are the key to the whole thing,” Sheriff Bordenkircher would say. “I can arrange for a hell of a deal. How about seven years for two murders? You just put the Swami and the rest of the leaders behind bars, and you’ll be out in no time. You’ll go to a

federal prison, and you'll get the Federal [Witness] Protection Program. Think of your family.”⁷⁶

Despite the tempting offer, Tirtha refused to implicate his spiritual master in the murder conspiracy of Sulocana. Tirtha wrote, “If I need to, I will put all of it [my wife and son] aside to protect my beloved gurudeva. I have already made that decision and nothing anyone can do will alter it. They can offer to set me free, arrange for other prisoners to beat or kill me, even hurt my family. I only know that Srila Bhaktipada is my lord and master.”⁷⁷

Tirtha considered real heroism to be eternal loyalty to Bhaktipada. He explained, “The test is in the tough times. Do we weaken because we are punished or mistreated, or do we remain determined, convinced of Krishna’s mercy, of his divine plan? Believe me, the real hero will be any who stick it out to the very end with Srila Bhaktipada. If we have to die for his mission, then it will be an honor. We are fully protected if we just rally behind His Divine Grace Srila Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada.”⁷⁸

Tirtha takes full rap.

Tirtha refused to implicate Bhaktipada in the murder. He explained, “I could have accepted a deal for ten years if I would have implicated the ‘Swami,’ but then I would have become the villain.”⁷⁹

Tirtha protected Bhaktipada: “I’m not going to bear false witness against an exalted spiritual leader. I have no knowledge of any illegal activity by the Swami.”⁸⁰

Tirtha also protected the other members of the murder conspiracy: “They’re trying to use me to attack New Vrindaban. They’re going to try to prove a conspiracy between myself and New Vrindaban to kill someone. They aren’t going to find it. I consider myself a political prisoner.”⁸¹

But privately Tirtha wrote a personal letter to Bhaktipada apologizing for any inconvenience he might have caused the community. The *Los Angeles Times* reported, “Swami Bhaktipada said Tirtha wrote him from jail to apologize if he had caused the commune any difficulty. The guru said he responded with a short note advising Tirtha ‘to chant the name of God and to depend on God’s help and mercy.’”⁸²

Radhanatha Swami visits Tirtha in jail.

The first devotee to visit Tirtha in jail was the “most kind and compassionate” Radhanatha Swami. (We cannot forget that Tirtha and Radhanatha were very close. For three years, since 1983 when Tirtha was banished to Ohio for the murder of Cakradhari, Tirtha often served as Radhanatha’s chauffeur and drove him all across Ohio to the newly-initiated sannyasi’s college cooking classes and preaching centers. Tirtha had the greatest affection and respect for Radhanatha.) Tirtha recalled:

When I was first arrested and put in jail, it was Radhanatha Swami who first came to see me. He spoke to me in a most kind and compassionate manner, explaining that my life was now completely in Krishna’s hands. Speaking with him through the thick security glass, I was ashamed and embarrassed to be in such a predicament. He told me to concentrate on Krishna and nothing else. Only Krishna could help me now. Before leaving he gave me copies of the all-in-one *Srimad-bhagavatam*, *Caitanya-caritamrita*,

and *Bhagavad-gita*. Reading these books anew would mark the beginning of my new life in prison, and a new era of consciousness, not as a convict, but as a devotee. . . .

When I next spoke with Radhanatha Swami he said that I was most fortunate, for Krishna was showing me great mercy by ripping everything away so abruptly. Perhaps if it didn't kill me it would make me much stronger. Die before you die. Surely this is what death is like for the soul too attached to home and hearth. Indeed, it surely felt like death, with everything I held so dearly, now gone in an instant.⁸³

Radhanatha Swami confirmed, "I visited Tirtha while he was in jail and we only discussed religious issues and never talked about his charges."⁸⁴

Radhanatha preached to Tirtha, "Without a goal worth dying for we have nothing worthwhile to live for. Any shallow creature can speak these words. Very few most fortunate souls have the courage and integrity to engrave these words within the heart of hearts and remain faithful in the face of life and death."⁸⁵

Sulocana's body was cremated in California and his ashes sent to India, as he requested in his will. Mrs. Bryant noted, "My son will be cremated in California. In his will, he stipulated that his ashes be spread over India."⁸⁶

Government's principal witness nearly killed by gas explosion.

The day following Tirtha's arrest, a huge explosion at Randall Gorby's house, allegedly caused by him illegally tapping into a gas line, nearly killed him. An FBI agent testified: "Mr. Gorby had suffered some trauma and shock as a result of being blown through the roof of his house. He was in intensive care ward at Ohio Valley Medical Center in Wheeling. He had first-, second- and third-degree burns over forty percent of his body. Doctors at that time did not expect him to live."⁸⁷

Gorby remembered, "On the 28th of May I was at home and I get out of bed at 9:00 in the morning and started to light a cigarette and my home totally disappeared. It was leveled to the ground. . . . I was seven weeks I believe in intensive care and in a coma for the month of June up until I believe the center of July."⁸⁸

Gorby was to be the principal witness for the prosecution. The *Wheeling News Register* reported, "Authorities have listed no cause for the explosion, but said Tirtha helped lay the natural gas line into Gorby's home."⁸⁹

Gorby said: "On the 28th of May I was at home. That morning, I was going to go back to the West Virginia State barracks in Wellsburg where I was giving statements to them at the time, and Trooper Knight had called me and woke me at 9:00 in the morning. I got out of bed and started to light a cigarette and my home totally disappeared. It was leveled to the ground. I was in critical condition for seven weeks, in intensive care, and in a coma for the month of June up until the center of July."⁹⁰

Gaura-Sakti, a friend of Gorby and one of the devotees involved in surveillance of Sulocana, said: "On three different occasions, Gorby approached me because he wanted me to help him or actually do the work for him, of running a gas line into his house, tapping off the gas main around through his front yard, to get free gas."⁹¹

Gorby suspected that perhaps Janmastami could have rigged the gas line and filled his house with gas. An FBI investigator reported, “Gorby was asked if he knew who Janmastami [was]. At that name, Gorby became very agitated and stated that Janmastami was a killer, that he had allegedly killed fifty people and that he could definitely do the kind of job that could have caused Gorby’s house to explode.”⁹²

Gorby found dead.

Gorby recovered from the blast and was enrolled in the Federal Witness Protection Program, but four years later in July 1990 he was found dead in his pickup truck at Bear Haven Recreation Area about ten miles east from his home in Elkins, West Virginia. Police authorities labeled it a suicide; they said that Gorby had asphyxiated himself by running a hose from the tailpipe to the cab of his truck; he died from “acute carbon monoxide intoxication.”⁹³

The *Wheeling News-Register* reported, “The body of 68-year-old Randall Gorby was found dead in his pick up truck by an off-duty Randolph County police officer in a wooded area 10 miles east of Elkins. . . . State Trooper J. A. Wise of the Elkins detachment of the state police said this morning foul play is not expected in the case. . . . A hose was found running from the exhaust pipe of Gorby’s pick up truck to the truck’s inside. Wise said he believes Gorby had been dead since last Thursday [July 19, 1990].”⁹⁴

The City of God Examiner noted, “The Associated Press called here yesterday to get our comment on the suicide of Randall Gorby. It appears that his offenses have caught up with him.”⁹⁵

Tirtha, who was in Los Angeles awaiting his trial for the murder of Sulocana, commented, “In this [suicide], his final cowardly act, the true character of a frustrated and misguided man was revealed.”⁹⁶

Mother Purnamasi, however, suspected that foul play was involved. She said, “They said Gorby’s death was suicide, but . . . [shortly after Gorby’s death] I was in Cameron [West Virginia, a small town with a population less than 1,000 people on Route 250 about 16 miles south of New Vrindaban] talking to Jim Kupfer. He told me that the day before Gorby died, he had come through Cameron. Gorby was afraid for his life and told Kupfer (a distant relative) that someone was following him; that someone was after him. Is this the mentality of someone about to commit suicide?”⁹⁷

For his entire life, Randall Gorby had never considered ending his life. An FBI interviewer noted, “Gorby was asked if he had tried to kill himself in the explosion that destroyed his home. Gorby emphatically stated that he did not try to kill himself; that he had never at any time entertained thoughts of ending his life.”⁹⁸

GBC leaders concerned about bad publicity for ISKCON.

ISKCON leaders were understandably concerned about the bad publicity created by Sulocana’s murder and the investigation of New Vrindaban. An emergency meeting of the North American GBC in San Diego was scheduled for August 18-19, 1986, and Bhaktipada promised to attend. *New Vrindaban News* reported, “Expectations are that the current controversy in ISKCON [the murder of Sulocana, Bhaktipada using the title

“Founder-Acarya,” New Vrindaban publishing new literature, Bhaktipada bringing a dog into ISKCON temples] may be cleared up (or stirred up.)”⁹⁹

It appears that Bhaktipada did not attend the meetings in San Diego, but he kept in touch by telephone. A spokesman for the GBC called him from San Diego and asked him if he would resign from the GBC if he was indicted by the Grand Jury in order to help “clear ISKCON’s name.” Bhaktipada agreed to resign if he was indicted.¹⁰⁰

Nandini devi dasi, who served under Mukunda in the ISKCON Public Relations in Los Angeles, confirmed:

In August [1986], the Governing Body Commission met in San Diego to discuss deviant gurus. They suspended Bhavananda and gave him a list of guidelines. He was to attend the morning program, shave his head regularly, read Prabhupada’s books, and not watch TV. On the list of recommendations, which they expected Bhavananda to sign and follow, was the requirement “do not travel with Bala,” his male companion.

The next resolution concerned Kirtanananda. He also received a set of guidelines, and the GBC telephoned him in New Vrindaban to extract his promise to resign if named in indictments for either of the murder cases [of Sulocana or Cakradhari]. Mukunda gave me a press release about Kirtanananda’s promise, which I typed and mailed out.¹⁰¹

However, when Bhaktipada was indicted, he refused to resign. Ravindra-Svarupa remembered the emergency GBC meeting in San Diego:

The GBC is getting pretty worried. In San Diego in August 1986 there’s a North American GBC meeting. And they deal with problems of Bhavananda, Ramesvara, and Kirtanananda. . . .

The GBC body accepts Kirtanananda Swami’s assurance that he will take voluntary suspension of his GBC duties upon being indicted by a Grand Jury. In America, the system is, before you get charged with a crime, there’s a thing called a Grand Jury, twenty people or so, who hear the prosecutor’s case and give the okay [to press charges]. This is the English system that America follows. . . . There was a Grand Jury investigating Kirtanananda. In fact, I got subpoenaed to talk about it. . . .

When he was indicted—accused of these crimes—he didn’t resign, even though he said he was going to. So they [the GBC] took several statements to show that they’re very worried about Kirtanananda, again that the “Founder-Acarya” title be only used for Srila Prabhupada. Dogs will not be allowed inside any ISKCON temple. They asked him to stop any further publication of the writings of Srila Prabhupada without the agreement of the North American BBT trustees. He was publishing BBT literature on his own. Really what he had done, if you see these, the other thing is that basically he had now his own movement going. He was going anywhere he wanted, opening his own Bhaktipada temples, he was not at this point answerable or answering to the GBC at all. He was under investigation by the government, and they [the GBC] were really worried about him.¹⁰²

Bhaktipada meets with conspirators in Bombay.

During July, Bhaktipada traveled to India, spending most of his time in Bombay and Vrindaban. He had an important meeting in Bombay with Radhanatha Swami, Tapahpunja Swami, and Janmastami. They had to get their story straight in case they were subpoenaed to appear in court. Bhaktipada’s servant and chauffeur candidly spoke

about the secret conversation he heard from the passenger's seat of Bhaktipada's private car. Priyavrata recalled:

I was sitting in the passenger seat of a car; Bhaktipada sat in the driver's seat. In the back seat was Janmastami, Tapahpunja and Radhanatha. They were trying to decide what story they should present to the authorities if they were subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury. They wanted to make sure that they all had the same story. It would be very bad for their alibi if they spoke different things, if they weren't perfectly consistent.

At one point, Bhaktipada stopped and asked me, "Priyavrata, I understand you're from a Mafia family. How would you have gotten this job done?"

I replied without hesitation, "I would have hired a professional; someone with experience; someone with credentials; someone discreet, who wouldn't blab about it to everyone he met. Not someone like Tapahpunja."

After I spoke, Bhaktipada scornfully glowered at Tapahpunja, who shrunk in the back seat like a naughty child getting scolded by an angry parent, and chastised him, saying: "You're useless, Tapahpunja! You messed everything up! It's all your fault! You're to blame for all this!"¹⁰³

It seems that Bhaktipada was using Tapahpunja as a scapegoat; all the conspirators were equally guilty, especially those who preached to Tirtha that "the demon must be destroyed." The plot to eliminate Sulocana was orchestrated by devotees who were very much inexperienced in arranging a professional murder. Tapahpunja recalled, "In my reflection on the whole incident, there was no fine-tuned, orchestrated 'plot' to stop Sulocana. Yes, there were a lot of private conversations, a lot of anger, a lot of fear, bravado and loose talk, but there was no grand plan."¹⁰⁴

New Vrindaban leaders leave the community.

After this meeting, Radhanatha abandoned his preaching centers in Kent, Athens, Cincinnati, and Athens, Ohio, and Morgantown, West Virginia which he had spent years developing, and began spending nearly all his time in India. He rarely returned to the United States, except for brief visits. Janmastami remained in India hiding out in Kuruksetra. Janmastami explained: "After the whacking [of Sulocana] in Los Angeles I was picked up off the streets of Philly by the FBI. This was in mid-June 1986. I came back to the festival [at New Vrindaban] (July 4, 1986) and was ordered to go to India."¹⁰⁵

Tapahpunja left India and flew to Australia and then Malaysia, where he served at Bhaktipada's temple in Penang. Other important New Vrindaban managers also left the community, some never to return: Kuladri moved to Arizona, Dharmatma and Parambrahma moved to Florida, Dulal-Candra moved to North Carolina, and Sundarakara moved to Vermont. Hayagriva also left the community at this time, but he was always coming and going from the United States to India and Mexico and back. Umapati Swami left New Vrindaban a few years later, in 1988. Even Bhaktipada stayed at New Vrindaban less frequently and seemed to me to spend more time in India than usual. Without exception, those New Vrindaban managers who might have been involved in the conspiracy to murder Sulocana left the community.

New Vrindaban managers hire expensive attorneys.

Several New Vrindaban managers were subpoenaed to appear in court. Several worked out deals with the government in return for important testimony. Some hired expensive lawyers to represent themselves. Sergeant Thomas Westfall noted, “Gorrick, Villa, Fawley and Reid had pleaded guilty to Federal charges.”¹⁰⁶

Kuladri, who had moved with his family to Tucson, Arizona, visited the law offices of Rothman Gordon Foreman and Groudine in the prestigious Grant Building in downtown Pittsburgh. The firm agreed to represent him for \$125 per hour and to begin working after he paid a \$10,000 retainer. The firm explained to him, “Unfortunately, you have been implicated in some very serious matters. As I told you [in our office when you visited], I think we will be able to work everything out to your benefit in the long run. However, litigation is time consuming and expensive. . . . I have quoted you a retainer of \$10,000 which is a minimum fee to be applied against my hourly rate of \$125.00 per hour. . . . You will be also responsible for out of the pocket expenses such as long distance phone calls and mileage.”¹⁰⁷

Tirtha saddled with public defender.

In the scramble for survival, Tirtha was neglected. No one hired an expensive lawyer for Tirtha; he had to depend on a public defender for his defense. Tirtha had performed the supreme sacrifice and now he was practically forgotten and abandoned. He thought he would get the death penalty.

Tirtha wrote: “I thought we’d all stick together. But it’s true: the rats started to escape from the sinking ship. People were not as devoted and dedicated as I assumed. It showed to be a house of cards. . . . My point is: all these guys were up to their eyeballs in the plots and sub-plots. They were the ones promoting and encouraging all of it. They were giving the guidance and counseling for me. We were aspiring to be their servants. We were like putty in their hands. The people who disagreed were banished, ridiculed, spat upon, beat up or killed.”

Tapahpunja was also left to fend for himself. New Vrindaban, it seemed, only cared about Bhaktipada’s legal defense. All resources were directed to Bhaktipada’s legal fund. Tapahpunja’s mother, Irene White (Sheldon), complained to New Vrindaban’s legal advisor Tulsi dasa (Dick Dezio), “I love my son and want him back in the States and therefore I implore you to keep him as well as me informed of his legal position at this time. His many letters to ‘so-called’ friends there have remained unanswered!! Hearing from you in letter form or through phone would be appreciated. I will no longer stand for the complete ignorance all of you have shown toward my son and if necessary may take matters into my own hands. You all have ignored him long enough!”¹⁰⁸

New Vrindaban lays off 187 employees.

Sulocana’s death effectively set off an avalanche of intensive government investigations by the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service, the Los Angeles Police, the West Virginia State Police and the Marshall County Sheriff’s Department, which resulted in formidable and continuous legal pressure against Bhaktipada and the New Vrindaban community which continued for a decade. Marshall County Sheriff Donald Bordenkircher was quoted in the newspapers saying: “This is the beginning of the end of New Vrindaban as we now know it.”

On September 11th, 1986, the New Vrindaban community announced the layoff of the entire 187-member work force of payroll employees in “an attempt to include the entire [non-devotee] community in the unfair, extravagant investigations of the community.” Tosana-Krishna dasa, a community spokesman, claimed the layoffs were not based on economic necessity, but on principle: “We are doing very well financially,” he said. “This has been one of our best years yet. . . . [But] we are not separate entities out here. . . . The employees are part of the community and should feel the brunt of the problems we have also.”¹⁰⁹

New Vrindaban News, on the other hand, indicated that the layoffs were an economic necessity; to garner financial resources for legal defense. *New Vrindaban News* reported, “As everyone knows by know, New Vrindaban has laid off its entire hired work force. This action is an effort to garner necessary financial resources for legal defense in these investigations. New Vrindaban would like to thank its employees for their understanding and support. It is hope that this action will end in two weeks, and that workers will return at this time.”¹¹⁰

Grand jury meets.

On September 15th, 1986, a federal grand jury met to investigate a possible connection between New Vrindaban members and the death of Sulocana. William Kolibash, the U.S. attorney for the North District of West Virginia, said, “It’s as much in the Krishna’s best interest as anybody’s. If there’s nothing going on, let’s find out.”¹¹¹

Bhaktipada welcomed the investigation: “They are welcome to investigate as much as possible. It can’t hurt us. If we’ve done nothing wrong, there is nothing to hide. An investigation will only show that we are what we say we are—religious people who have no other business but to serve God.”¹¹²

During November 1986 the North American temple presidents met in Chicago and requested the GBC to remove Bhaktipada from ISKCON. Ravindra-Svarupa remembered, “The next thing that happened that year was we had a meeting of the North American Temple Presidents in Chicago in November. At that time I became president of this organization. . . . In the Chicago meeting we added the North American Prabhupada Disciples to our group. . . . We asked the GBC to remove Kirtanananda.”¹¹³

Sulocana’s three-year-old son drowns.

Sulocana’s three-year-old son Nimai accidentally drowned in a New Vrindaban lake while playing with other youths on November 23, 1986.¹¹⁴

Lokavarnattama explained, “I was there when they pulled that small boy from the lake. He had wandered from his mother with another playmate, and fallen from a platform into the water. I carried him to the ambulance and watched as a team of physicians tried feverishly for hours to revive his lifeless body. The next day I brought his saddened mother to the funeral parlor to make arrangements for her son’s burial. This was indeed a mystery for all of us in New Vrindaban; how the Lord could take such an innocent helpless child from our midst. It was a lesson. How frail and helpless children are, and how great is our responsibility as parents to protect them.”¹¹⁵

When asked to speak about the boy's drowning, Bhaktipada quipped: "From a philosophical point of view, we could say that there was some bad karma in the family."
116

¹ Tirtha reported Sulocana's last activities to both Randall Gorby and Tapahpunja.

² "Thomas Drescher-PC 187" (May 21, 1989), 1.

³ Dr. Lakshmanana Sad Yavagiswaran, from trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury," Day III (March 13, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 637-638.

⁴ Tirtha Swami, cited in *Thomas Drescher Before the Federal Grand Jury for the Northern District of West Virginia Investigative Grand Jury, August 11, 1994, Wheeling, West Virginia*, 67.

⁵ Gabriel Alon, co-owner of Ugly Duckling Rent-A-Car, Los Angeles Airport branch, from Trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury," Day IV (March 14, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1097-1099.

⁶ Dharmatma, from Trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury," Day IV (March 14, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 832-837, 941.

⁷ Yamuna dasi, cited in "Deadly Devotion: Hare Krishna Episode," *Lion Television: Investigation Discovery Channel*, broadcast July 2, 2013.

⁸ Ramacandra dasa, from a conversation with the author on April 10, 2007.

⁹ Tapahpunja, e-mail to the author (March 29, 2015).

¹⁰ Dharmatma, from Trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury," Day IV (March 14, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 832-837, 941.

¹¹ Janmastami das, e-mail letter to the author (July 29, 2008).

¹² "Thomas Drescher-PC 187" (May 21, 1989), 1.

¹³ Sandy Fitzgerald, "Drescher Ordered Extradited," *The Intelligencer* (August 14, 1987).

¹⁴ Tapahpunja Swami, e-mail to the author (April 3, 2015).

¹⁵ Randall Gorby, cited in trial transcript by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury," Day V (March 15, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1149-1150.

¹⁶ Devamrita Swami, cited in "Bryant Death Reports: Gorricks Account vs. Reality," typewritten document in the New Vrindaban Archives.

¹⁷ Madhava Ghosh, cited in "Bryant Death Reports: Gorricks Account vs. Reality," typewritten document in the New Vrindaban Archives.

¹⁸ Devamrita Swami, cited in "Bryant Death Reports: Gorricks Account vs. Reality," typewritten document in the New Vrindaban Archives.

¹⁹ Telephone conversation between Randall Gorby and Thomas Drescher.

²⁰ Telephone conversation between Randall Gorby and Suzanne Bludeau.

²¹ Berkeley police officer Joe Sanchez, quoted by Elizabeth Fernandez in "Mysterious Murder Silences a Maverick Krishna," *San Francisco Examiner* (July 6, 1986), 1.

²² David Gold, *After the Absolute*, chapter 17.

²³ Thomas Westfall, cited in "Deadly Devotion: Hare Krishna Episode," *Lion Television: Investigation Discovery Channel*, broadcast July 2, 2013.

²⁴ Ravindra Swarupa dasa, "Lecture: The Hidden History of ISKCON, Part 4. (July 10, 1999),"

http://audio.iskcondesiretree.info/03_-_ISKCON_Prabhujis/ISKCON_Prabhujis_-

K_to_R/His_Grace_Ravindra_Svarupa_Prabhu/Seminars/The_Hidden_History_Of_ISKCON/RSWP_Seminar_-_The_Hidden_History_Of_ISKCON_4_-_1999-07-10.mp3 (accessed May 14, 2014).

²⁵ Janmastami dasa, "New Vrindaban History, for the Record," *Sampradaya Sun* (December 22, 2006).

²⁶ Ramesvara, cited by John Dart in "Killing Sparks Federal Probe of Krishna Sect," *Los Angeles Times* (July 20, 1986), 32.

²⁷ Mukunda Goswami, cited by Robert A. Fernandez, "Krishna dissident is slain on coast," *San Francisco Examiner* (undated, c. May 1986).

²⁸ Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, quoted by Thomas Ferraro in "Krishnas Involved in Seamy Accusations, Including Murder," *Sunday News-Register* (July 6, 1986).

²⁹ Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, cited in "The Fire's Getting Hotter," *New Vrindaban News* (October 14, 1986), 2.

³⁰ Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, cited in "Mysterious Murder Silences a Maverick Krishna," *San Francisco Examiner* (July 6, 1986), A1, 12.

³¹ Devamrita Swami, "A Word To The Wise Is Sufficient," *New Vrindaban News* (June 1, 1986).

³² "MAINTAIN THE PURITY," *New Vrindaban News* (June 14, 1986)

³³ "BE CAREFUL WHO YOU TALK TO, PRABHUS"—" *Brijabasi Spirit* (March 24, 1987)

³⁴ Kuladri dasa, interview with investigators (undated, c. 1989), Villa GJ2.

³⁵ Telephone conversation between Randall Gorby and Thomas Drescher.

³⁶ "Witness Interview with Terry Sheldon (by phone in Malaysia), Richard Lonsford Investigations, Moreno Valley, California (March 22, 1990).

³⁷ Transcript of State Police wiretap of a telephone conversation between Randall Gorby and Tirtha dasa quoted in Jacob Gordon's *Holy Cow Swami* video (1996).

³⁸ Purnamasi dasi, "Mother Purnamasi's Statements" (September 5, 1992).

³⁹ Tirtha Swami, cited in *Thomas Drescher Before the Federal Grand Jury for the Northern District of West Virginia Investigative Grand Jury, August 11, 1994, Wheeling, West Virginia*, 69.

⁴⁰ Dharmatma, from Trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury," Day IV (March 14, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 832-837, 941.

⁴¹ Telephone conversation between Randall Gorby and Thomas Drescher, taped at 7:00 pm from public phone in Bethany, West Virginia with Gorby's permission, Monday, May 26, 1986, taken by Trooper W. I. Knight, West Virginia State Police, Wellsburg, West Virginia.

⁴² FBI Interview with Randall Gorby (June 18, 1986).

⁴³ Tirtha Swami, cited in *Thomas Drescher Before the Federal Grand Jury for the Northern District of West Virginia Investigative Grand Jury, August 11, 1994, Wheeling, West Virginia*, 70.

⁴⁴ Tapahpunja, e-mail to the author (March 29, 2015).

⁴⁵ Dharmatma, from Trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury," Day IV (March 14, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 832-837, 941.

⁴⁶ During this conversation, Tapahpunja did not admit that he had been involved in the murder plot and had picked Tirtha up at the Columbus airport.

⁴⁷ Tapahpunja dasa, telephone conversation with the author (August 5, 2003).

⁴⁸ Kuladri dasa, from trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury," Day III (March 13, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 478.

⁴⁹ Tirtha Swami, letter to the author (August 21, 2003).

⁵⁰ Janmastami, e-mail letter to the author (August 1, 2008).

⁵¹ Tapahpunja, e-mail to the author (April 3, 2015).

⁵² Other possible reasons include:

(1) Bhaktipada was not informed of the murder plot until too late in the game.

(2) Bhaktipada was informed, but he was not notified of the minimum amount of \$8,000 financial backing promised.

(3) Bhaktipada simply wanted to exhibit his power and show Tirtha and Tapahpunja exactly who was in charge. Perhaps he thought they had become proud of their accomplishment, and he intended to teach them a lesson in humility by making them suffer and wait.

⁵³ Tapahpunja dasa, telephone conversation with the author (August 5, 2003).

⁵⁴ Dharmatma, from Trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, “United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury,” Day IV (March 14, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 832-837, 941.

⁵⁵ Kirtanananda Swami, from trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, “United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury,” Day VII (March 19, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1741.

⁵⁶ Tapahpunja dasa, telephone conversation with the author (August 5, 2003).

⁵⁷ Janmastami, “New Vrindaban History, for the Record,” *Sampradaya Sun* (December 22, 2006).

⁵⁸ Kuladri dasa, interview with investigators, Villa GJ2 (undated, c. 1989), p. 63-64.

⁵⁹ “A Pure Devotee Faces a Fallen Nation: Srila Bhaktipada Meets CBS News,” *Brijabasi Spirit* (January 1987), 9.

⁶⁰ Mahabuddhi dasa, cited by Special Agent Jeffrey M. Banwell, “FBI Interview” (September 16, 1986), 3.

⁶¹ Radhanatha Swami, Grand Jury interview (December 7, 1989), Elkins, West Virginia.

⁶² Radhanatha Swami, from trial transcript, cited by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, “United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury,” Day VI (March 18, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1664.

⁶³ Malati devi dasi (Melanie Nagel), “A Factual Timeline of Events,” *Sampradaya Sun* (October 24, 2008).

⁶⁴ Dharmatma dasa, “A Response To Malati Mataji’s ‘Factual Timeline,’” *Sampradaya Sun* (October 28, 2008).

⁶⁵ Ronald Piatt, quoted in “Killing Sparks Probe of Krishna Sect,” *The Cult Observer* (September 1986).

⁶⁶ Tapahpunja, e-mail to the author (April 3, 2015).

⁶⁷ Dharmatma dasa, e-mail to the author (November 16, 2016).

⁶⁸ “Name: Dan Van Pelt, aka Devanananda dasa,” investigative report in New Vrindaban archives, 2.

⁶⁹ Adwaita dasa, cited in “Bryant Death Reports: Gorrlick Account vs. Reality,” typewritten document in the New Vrindaban Archives.

⁷⁰ Adwaita dasa, letter to Tulsi dasa (August 1, 1990).

⁷¹ Janmastami, e-mail to the author (August 1, 2008).

⁷² Janmastami, e-mail to the author (April 5, 2015).

⁷³ Tapahpunja dasa, telephone conversation with the author (August 5, 2003).

⁷⁴ Tapahpunja, e-mail to the author (March 29, 2015).

⁷⁵ “Suspect in Krishna Murder Scheme Taken Into Custody,” *Wheeling News-Register* (June 20, 1990).

⁷⁶ “Get the Swami!” *The Religious Freedom Fighter*, vol. 1, no. 1 (c. September 1987).

⁷⁷ Tirtha, letter to Daivata dasa (September 9, 1986).

⁷⁸ Tirtha, letter to Daivata dasa (October 28, 1986).

⁷⁹ Tirtha, letter to the author (September 19, 2004).

⁸⁰ Tirtha dasa, quoted in “Krishnas May Face Charges,” *The Parkersburg News* (April 12, 1987), V-55.

⁸¹ Tirtha Swami, cited by Thomas Ferraro, “Krishna Swami, Convicted Killer,” *UPI News Service* (August 23, 1987).

⁸² Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, cited by John Dart in “Killing Sparks Federal Probe of Krishna Sect,” *Los Angeles Times* (July 20, 1986), 3.

⁸³ Tirtha dasa, “The Twenty-Six Qualities,” part 12: “Exile,” which was published on Tirtha’s website (tirthainprison.com) but later removed.

⁸⁴ Radhanatha Swami, Grand Jury interview (December 7, 1989), Elkins, West Virginia.

-
- ⁸⁵ Radhanatha Swami, letter to Tirtha Swami (October 1, 1989), from Puna, India.
- ⁸⁶ Helga Bryant, cited by Robert A. Fernandez, “Krishna dissident is slain on coast,” *San Francisco Examiner* (undated, c. May 1986).
- ⁸⁷ Jeffrey M. Banwell, FBI agent, cited in trial transcript by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, “United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury,” Day VI (March 18, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1689-1690.
- ⁸⁸ Randall Gorby, cited in “Pre-Trial Hearing, Thomas Drescher Case” (Undated, Los Angeles), 118.
- ⁸⁹ “Bordenkircher Standing By Remarks,” *Wheeling News-Register* (July 21, 1986), 11.
- ⁹⁰ Randall Gorby, cited in trial transcript by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, “United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury,” Day V (March 15, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1152.
- ⁹¹ Gaura-Sakti, cited in trial transcript by Halasz & Halasz, court reporters, “United States of America, Plaintiff, v. CR 90-87 Keith Gordon Ham, Terry Sheldon, Steven Fitzpatrick, New Vrindaban Community, Inc., Govardhan, Inc., Cathedral of Healing, Inc., Defendants, Before: Honorable Robert R. Merhige, Jr., United States District Judge and a Jury,” Day VI (March 18, 1991), Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1709-1710.
- ⁹² Special Agent Jeffrey M. Banwell, “FBI interview with Randall Gorby” (June 24, 1986), 2.
- ⁹³ “West Virginia Department of Health, Vital Registration Office: Physician’s/Medical Examiner Certificate of Death,” for Randall Clark Gorby (July 22, 1990).
- ⁹⁴ Kathy Shriner, “Carbon Monoxide Is Cause of Death,” *Wheeling News-Register* (July 24, 1990).
- ⁹⁵ “Trial Update,” *The City of God Examiner*, no. 27 (July 25, 1990), 2.
- ⁹⁶ T. Red Jacket (Tirtha Swami), *Desperation of the Angeles*, 99.
- ⁹⁷ Paurnamasi dasi, “Mother Paurnamasi’s Statements” (September 5, 1992).
- ⁹⁸ FBI Interview with Randall Gorby (June 18, 1986), 3.
- ⁹⁹ “Bhaktipada and ISKCON,” *New Vrindaban News* (c. August 1986).
- ¹⁰⁰ Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, quoted by Mukunda Maharaja in “Murder Quickens Wider Crisis in Krishna Sect,” *Hinduism Today* (September/October 1986), 17.
- ¹⁰¹ Nori Muster, *Betrayal of the Spirit* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana: 1997), 144.
- ¹⁰² Ravindra Swarupa dasa, “Lecture: The Hidden History of ISKCON, Part 4. (July 10, 1999),” http://audio.iskcondesiretree.info/03_-_ISKCON_Prabhujis/ISKCON_Prabhujis_-_K_to_R/His_Grace_Ravindra_Svarupa_Prabhu/Seminars/The_Hidden_History_Of_ISKCON/RSWP_Seminar_-_The_Hidden_History_Of_ISKCON_4_-_1999-07-10.mp3 (accessed May 14, 2014).
- ¹⁰³ [P], conversation with the author (September 14, 2003).
- ¹⁰⁴ Tapahpunja, e-mail to the author (March 29, 2015).
- ¹⁰⁵ Janmastami dasa, e-mail letter to the author (August 22, 2008).
- ¹⁰⁶ Sergeant Thomas Westfall, e-mail to the author (March 7, 2014).
- ¹⁰⁷ Gerard J. Koechel, letter to Kuladri (Arthur Villa) (October 27, 1987).
- ¹⁰⁸ Irene White (Sheldon), letter to Tulsi dasa (September 18, 1989).
- ¹⁰⁹ Tosana Krishna dasa, cited by Tracy Roberts in “Krishna Commune to Lay Off 187 Payroll Employees,” *Wheeling News Register* (September 11, 1986), 5.
- ¹¹⁰ “New Vrindaban Layoffs,” *New Vrindaban News* (September 14, 1986).
- ¹¹¹ William Kolibash, cited by Bill Moushey and Carl Remensky in “Crimes in Question: Federal probe begins of Krishna town in West Virginia,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (September 15, 1986), 1.
- ¹¹² Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, cited by Thomas Ferraro in “Krishna Probe Welcome,” *The Intelligencer* (June 19, 1986), 15.
- ¹¹³ Ravindra Swarupa dasa, “Lecture: The Hidden History of ISKCON, Part 4. (July 10, 1999),” http://audio.iskcondesiretree.info/03_-_ISKCON_Prabhujis/ISKCON_Prabhujis_-_K_to_R/His_Grace_Ravindra_Svarupa_Prabhu/Seminars/The_Hidden_History_Of_ISKCON/RSWP_Seminar_-_The_Hidden_History_Of_ISKCON_4_-_1999-07-10.mp3 (accessed May 14, 2014).
- ¹¹⁴ *Petition For Writ of Habeas Corpus*, Civil Action suit no. 87-C-7W in the Circuit Court of Marshall County, West Virginia, for Jack W. Bryant and Helga L. Bryant, on behalf of Sarva Dharma Bryant, an

infant, Petitioners, verses Jane Seward, nee, Jane Bryant, a/k/a Jamuna Seward, Respondent, dated January 8, 1987, 2.

¹¹⁵ Larry Burstein (Lokavarnattama dasa), “Another View,” *Wheeling News-Register* (May 27, 1988).

¹¹⁶ Bhaktipada, cited in *Petition For Writ of Habeas Corpus*, Civil Action suit no. 87-C-7W in the Circuit Court of Marshall County, West Virginia, for Jack W. Bryant and Helga L. Bryant, on behalf of Sarva Dharma Bryant, an infant, Petitioners, verses Jane Seward, nee, Jane Bryant, a/k/a Jamuna Seward, Respondent, dated January 8, 1987, 2.