

My Dear Godbrothers,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at your lotus feet.
All Glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Recently there has been a considerable amount of discussion regarding His Divine Grace Srila Sridhar Deva Goswami (Sridhar Maharaj). As I fear that for the most part devotees are being misinformed as to his true position and subsequently may develop an offensive misunderstanding, I have selected excerpts from conversations between Srila Prabhupada and Sridhar Maharaj and Sridhar Maharaj and leading ISKCON devotees on subject matters relevant to the current state of ISKCON's affairs. Not only will this paper properly inform you as to his position but hopefully it may serve to enlighten you as well.

In regard to my personal relationship with Sridhar Maharaj I accept him as my instructing spiritual master. In the Adi-lila of Chaitanya Charitamrta Srila Prabhupada writes, "A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master because in the scriptures acceptance of more than one is always forbidden. There is no limit however, to the number of instructing spiritual masters one may accept." [Cc. Adi-lila 1.36]
"...one who gives spiritual instructions based upon the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master...saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Krishna consciousness are called instructing spiritual masters. The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Krishna, although they have different dealings." [Cc. Adi-lila 1.34]

This paper was recently submitted at the North American GBC meeting in Dallas, Texas. I had hoped that my senior Godbrothers would recognize the present unfortunate position of many of the disciples of Srila Prabhupada and encourage those that are taking help from Sridhar Maharaj. Unfortunately, they took it otherwise. It is unfortunate for me if I am to lose the association of my elder Godbrothers, especially in the absence of Srila Prabhupada. In this regard Sridhar Maharaj once counseled me "So there may be disturbances, rather we may say there should be. Disturbance must come. Because our most beloved guru has withdrawn from amongst us and should we like to live peacefully? Such a great curse as it may be said is thrown on my head and should I like to live peacefully? In it's retinue disturbance must come and we have to undergo them. But we must remain sincere and face the difficulty in a proper way, understanding that it has come to train me to go in the right direction. What I have received from him, I understood in a rough estimation. Now things have come in such an order that I have to scrutinize myself in every position. Atma samiksha self analysis has begun. What I have got from him, I am under trial. In what way did I receive it? Properly? Or only showingly? The time has come to purify me. Whether I am a real student, a real disciple or only in face only in confession I am his disciple. What is the position of a real disciple? Should I live in the society, what is the depth of my creed? In what attitude have I accepted his teachings?

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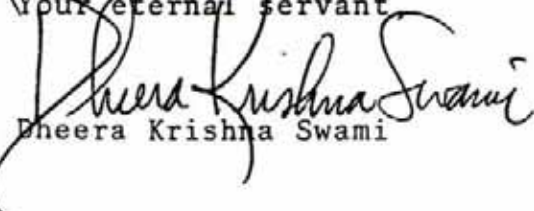
How deeply rooted is it in me? The fire is there, it has come to test me, whether I can stand. My acceptance is real? Or it is a sham, imitation. This fire will prove that. So we must not be afraid of any adverse circumstances. sukhinah ksatriyah partha labhante yuddham idrsam Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita that the battle you are facing, a happy ksatriya hankers after this. So a bad workman quarrels with his tools. My karma now has come to face me, to surround me and I can't avoid that. It is a result of my own karma, it has come from within me. So I must not quarrel with it. I must deal with it properly. We have to scrutinize what we thought we understood more accurately and find out within me. Where am I? What is my real need? And how much i'm hankering for the real thing? All these things will be expressed. It has come into publicity now. So this is a real field of sadhana. My sadhana and advancement needs all these difficulties. Otherwise we may not know what is progress and what is not progress. We can wait on blindly and we can patch up everything and we can give it to others and we may turn out to be hypocrites. So to purify our ownself it is necessary.

So the sincere student he will pass the examination. Others will fall prey to failure. Misfortune comes to enhance the bona fide and to eliminate the ostentatious attempt. So a period of suddhi purification will take place and those that are sincere, they will be victorious."

And as Srila Prabhupada once wrote in a letter, "Even amongst our Godbrothers we have misunderstanding, but none of us is astray from the service of Krishna. My Guru Maharaj ordered us to execute his mission combinedly. Unfortunately we are now separated. But none of us have stopped preaching Krishna consciousness. Even there was misunderstanding amongst the Godbrothers of my Guru Maharaj none of them deviated from the transcendental loving service of Krishna. The idea is that provocation and misunderstanding may remain between one man and another. But our staunch faith in Krishna consciousness may not allow any material disruption. Please therefore try to be sympathetic with any person, even if they differ. The only qualification we have to scrutinize is if one is acting in Krishna consciousness as far as one is able to do it."

My only request is that you all pray for me that I may not deviate from the transcendental loving service of Krishna and that my staunch faith in Krishna may not be disrupted under any circumstance. I pray to Srila Prabhupada and the Supreme Lord Krishna that I may be engaged in their eternal service according to my small capacity.

Your eternal servant


Dheera Krishna Swami

SRILA PRABHUPADA AND SRIDHAR MAHARAJ

Srila Prabhupada and Sridhar Maharaj first met sometime in the year 1930, in Allahabad, India. In a 1973 meeting at Sridhar Maharaj's math at Nabadwip Dham Srila Prabhupada recalls:

"So we are very fortunate to hear His Divine Grace, om vishnupada paramahansa paribrajakacharya bhakti-rakshaka Sridhar Maharaj. By age and by experience, in both ways he is senior to me. I was fortunate to have his association since a very long time perhaps in 1930, something like that. At that time he did not accept sannyas, he just left home, vanaprastha, in his white dress he went to Allahabad. Maharaj, I think you remember the incident when you went to Allahabad? On that auspicious occasion we were connected...There is a long story it will take time, but I had the opportunity of associating with Sridhar Maharaj for several years. Krishna and Prabhupada [Srila Bhaktisiddhanta] liked him to prepare me.

Sridhar Maharaj lived in my house for a few years so naturally we had very intimate talks and he was my good advisor. I took his advices, instructions very seriously because from the very begining I know that he is a pure vaishnava, a pure devotee and I wanted to associate with him and tried to help him also... our relationship is very intimate."

Herein we find the history of a transcendental relationship between these two pure devotees of the Lord. Addressing Sridhar Maharaj as "His Divine Grace" and "om vishnupad" forms of address for one regarded as a spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada has transcended the norms of social etiquette and superficial formality.

Intimately associating for a concentrated period of over 5 years often for 5 to 7 hours daily, Srila Prabhupada considered it that "Krishna and Prabhupada liked him to prepare me" for his future expansive missionary activities in the western world. While remembering their intimate talks, specifically in regard to the Bhagavad-gita Sridhar Maharaj recalls the depth in penetration of their discussions. "Once while discussing the verse dadami buddhi yogam tam yena mam upayanti te [Bg.10.10 "I give them the understanding by which they can come to me."] I submitted to him that here this upayanti te, this upa[come] is indicative of parakiya rasa[paramour relationship]. On this point he agreed with me saying, 'Yes, at this point there cannot be anything but the parakiya rasa of Braja.'"

Recognizing since the begining of their relationship Sridhar Maharaj as a "pure vaishnava, a pure devotee..." Srila Prabhupada most highly valued his instructions and advice. He would often consult with him regarding the spiritual significance of his failing business and family relationships.

An example of how Srila Prabhupada tried to help Sridhar Maharaj in his preaching work is in appreciating Sridhar Maharaj's uncanny ability for extracting the essence of the scriptures Srila Prabhupada helped to finance the publication of his original sanskrit-bengali work entitled, "Prapanna-jivanamrta" [Nectar in the Lives of the Surrendered] The book as well as containing original sanskrit verses composed by Sridhar Maharaj, is a compilation of verses from various Vaishnava scriptures such as the Srimad Bhagavatam and includes excerpts from the works of Srila Rupa Goswami. It is divided according to the

six divisions of surrender.

Constantly associating, whether in Allahabad, Calcutta or other parts of India, Srila Prabhupada and Sridhar Maharaj's relationship continually developed.

Srila Prabhupada: "In my householder life I had opened an office in Bombay for our business. The Bombay Gaudiya Math was established by Sridhar Maharaj and myself. We made two parties for begging collecting alms. Sridhar Maharaj, myself and Goswami Maharaj. So I took them to my chemist friends and I collected about five-hundred rupees. Sridhar Maharaj would speak, I would introduce and Goswami Maharaj would canvass."

In the Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta Srila Satsvarupa das Goswami writes, "Abhay would often accompany Sridhar Maharaj and his assistants at preaching programs, where he would play the mrdanga. And when Sridhar Maharaj fell ill, Abhay led the other devotees on preaching engagements, performing kirtan, playing mrdanga, and giving lectures on the Bhagavatam."

While still in Bombay Srila Prabhupada and Sridhar Maharaj were the receiving party for Bon Maharaj upon his return arrival from Europe. Although dismayed by his changed appearance which was minus the tridanda of a Gaudiya sannyasi, the shika of a vaishnava as well as the traditional robes, they still eagerly inquired in regard to the preaching field in the west. Swami Bon replied "They ask questions that cannot be answered." Concerned, Srila Prabhupada and Sridhar Maharaj inquired further as to the nature of those questions and one after another Sridhar Maharaj answered them all. At last Bon Maharaj was left dumbfounded and Srila Prabhupada boldly declared, "Today, Europe has been defeated by Asia!"

Perhaps the most important question to be answered regarding Sridhar Maharaj is that once Srila Prabhupada said that he and two others were responsible for disobeying the order of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta regarding the next Acharya so would Srila Prabhupada approve of our taking counsel from him? With full knowledge of the events surrounding the disintegration of the Gaudiya Math Srila Prabhupada states in the same 1973 conversation: "...our relationship is very intimate. After the breakdown of the Gaudiya Math I wanted to organize another organization making Sridhar Maharaj as the head." Additionally when Srila Prabhupada returned to India in October of 1967 after his successful preaching initiative in America he stayed with Sridhar Maharaj in Nabadwip and observed his Vyas-Puja celebration. At that time Srila Prabhupada wrote a letter to Srila Satsvarupa das Goswami saying, "Yesterday we have all come to Nabadwip Dham. This place is an establishment of one of my Godbrothers. It is very nice and extensive place and my Godbrother B.R. Sridhar Maharaj has spared one entire house for our stay. He has also agreed to cooperate with our society. We shall observe his birthday celebration tomorrow and the brahmacharies shall learn how to celebrate the spiritual master's birthday." Shortly afterwards Srila Prabhupada asked Sridhar Maharaj to be the president of his newly formed society, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Another question is commonly raised. It is said that one's preaching contribution can be judged according to the number of temples established, devotees converted and books published and distributed. So should Srila Prabhupada's disciples as the members of the most dynamic and expansive preaching movement on the planet subject themselves to the advice of anyone including Sridhar Maharaj? First of all Sridhar Maharaj travelled and preached extensively all over India, personally accompanying His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur for many years. He held positions of leadership in the Bombay, Delhi and Madras Maths. And although reluctant to give initiation he has accepted in excess of 1,000 disciples. Hardly the description of a bhajanandi. [Srila Prabhupada initiated between 2,500-3,000 disciples] If we were to have prematurely analyzed Srila Prabhupada's preaching activities prior to his coming to America we might be led to erroneous conclusions. If one thought that he had established one temple in Jhansi, now defunct; initiated one disciple and written a few bundles of manuscripts, he would be deceived from seeing the internal features of this purest devotee of the Lord. In the Upadeshamrta Srila Prabhupada writes, "One should therefore not commit any offense against a Vaishnava. Every devotee should be ready to take instructions from a superior Vaishnava, and a superior Vaishnava must be ready to help an inferior Vaishnava in all respects. One is superior or inferior according to his spiritual development in Krishna consciousness. One is forbidden to observe the activities of a pure Vaishnava from a material point of view. For the neophyte especially, considering a pure devotee from a material point of view is very injurious. One should therefore avoid observing a pure devotee externally, but should try to see the internal features and understand how he is engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord."

We do not mean to suggest that all discrimination should immediately be abandoned in consideration of Srila Prabhupada's Godbrothers but that it be applied. For example, Srila Prabhupada once wrote in a letter to Rupanuga Prabhu, "regarding my Godbrothers it is a fact that they have no life for preaching work. All are satisfied with a place for residence in the name of a temple. They engage disciples to get foodstuffs by transcendental devices and eat and sleep. They have no idea or brain how to broadcast the cult of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu." In this regard Sridhar Maharaj humorously recalls: "I heard from Krishna das Babaji Maharaj that before leaving the planet Swami Maharaj [Srila Prabhupada] requested him to beg forgiveness on his behalf from his Godbrothers. That at times he might have offended them while preaching. He said that although he had due respects towards them, still while preaching he might have offended them a little bit. As once I heard that Akincana Maharaj asked him, "What are your other Godbrothers doing?" And he replied, "Well they are just eating and sleeping and ringing the bells in the temples." Hearing this they became offended. And then they came to me. But my observation is neutral so I said, "The drum he is playing, if he accepts you as a player of the bell in that band then you should consider this to be a great honor." I told this, my view is different. I saw that he is playing a huge battle drum so if you get a chance to play the kasi the cymbals along with that, then that is a great honor to you. A more dignified position you get."

Srila Prabhupada further wrote, "...it is better not to mix with my Godbrothers very intimately because instead of inspiring our students and disciples, they may sometimes pollute them." Sridhar Maharaj recalls, "Swami Maharaj [Srila Prabhupada] had earlier approached me to train up some boys, but first they had been with Bon Maharaj disciples like Acyutananda, Ramanuja and some others. But Bon Maharaj he took one away from your Guru Maharaj and made him into his own disciple and then Swami Maharaj wrote to me in the name of Govinda Maharaj asking me to look after the boys. That letter I still have. So Acyutananda and Ramanuja came first and he wanted me to train them up. As he always had great trust in me that I will not make a disciple out of his disciple. For this reason he would come to me and also he knew me from the earlier days. Pishima [Srila Prabhupada's sister] had taken harinam diksha from Prabhupada [Srila Bhaktisiddhanta] and she had come to me for second initiation. At the time I decided not to give any diksha [initiation] because I thought myself unfit. So when Pishima came I had to turn her away. Many people had come, many many nice people, but I had to turn them away, all of them. And my senior Godbrothers, they all wanted me to become Acharya. Madhav Maharaj and Keshav Maharaj [Srila Prabhupada's sannyas guru] would not have become Acharyas if I had taken up the post of being Acharya. They all wanted me to become Acharya and if I had become Acharya they would not have become. They started initiating because I did not want to initiate. So your Prabhupada had great faith in me that I will not lure away one of his disciples. That's why he use to trust me. Because he knew that I will teach them the truth and I will not take them away, unlike many others."

After the unfortunate incident with Bon Maharaj Srila Prabhupada advised his disciples to accept Sridhar Maharaj as their siksha guru [instructing spiritual master] and take up residence in his temple for spiritual safety and enlightenment. In a letter dated January 9, 1969 he wrote, "I suspect that you have some interest in taking instruction from some siksha guru, but in this connection because you are my disciple and I think a sincere soul, it is my duty to refer you to someone who is competent to act as siksha guru. This Bon Maharaj, perhaps you do not know has been rejected by Guru Maharaj [Srila Bhaktisiddhanta]. So I cannot recommend him as siksha guru. I think that he has no actual spiritual asset. For spiritual advancement of life we must go to someone who is actually practising spiritual life, not to some head of a mundane institution, not to one who has offended his spiritual master in so many ways. I do not wish to go into all the details here but I must inform you that this Bon Maharaj may be regarded as a black snake, and at the time of his disappearance my Guru Maharaj did not even wish to have him in his presence, due to the character of this Bon Maharaj. So if you are actually serious to take instructions from a siksha guru I can refer you to one who is the most highly competent of all my Godbrothers. This is B.R. Sridhar Maharaj, whom I consider to be even my siksha guru so what to speak of the benefit that you can have from his association. He is living in Nabadwip and if you like I can give you a letter of introduction as well as I will send him a letter to allow you to stay there with him. So if you and Acyutananda are not lost to the poison of Bon Maharaj and are still serious about advancement of your spiritual life, I will advise you to

go to Sridhar Maharaj. Or else I do not know what will save you. So my advice to you is immediately leave the unhealthy and envious association of Bon Maharaj...and go to someone who will be competent to act as siksha guru. This is Sridhar Maharaj.

When I was in India with the others we lived with Sridhar Maharaj...if you both go there now, it will be very good for your spiritual benefit. Then I will feel that you are safe...you can make arrangements for that house[spared by Sridhar Maharaj] so that your other Godbrothers may go there in the future. It is my duty to save you, so leave Brindaban, live peacefully with Sridhar Maharaj ...and thereby you will be spiritually enlightened...."

Srila Prabhupada condemns Bon Maharaj as a head of a mundane institution, possessing no spiritual assets, an offender to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and a poisonous black snake! In sharp contrast with this dark portrayal Srila Prabhupada illuminates the qualities of Sridhar Maharaj as the "most competent of all my Godbrothers", one who is "actually practising spiritual life", "someone competent to act as siksha guru" and most astoundingly, "I consider [Sridhar Maharaj] to be even my siksha guru what to speak of the benefit that you can have from his association!"

In the Adi-lila of Caitanya-caritamrta it is stated in regard to the siksha guru[instructing spiritual master]

"One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Krishna..."

Purport

Srila Krishna das Kaviraja Goswami states that the instructing spiritual master is a bona fide representative of Sri Krishna... There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions...There is no difference between the shelter giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service."[Cc.Adi-lila 1.47]

Srila Prabhupada concludes by saying that he will feel that his disciples are "safe" when under the care of Sridhar Maharaj and thereby will be "spiritually enlightened."

Although it may be said that Srila Prabhupada encouraged his Godbrothers in general, can anyone, anywhere produce a similar statement of endorsement? The fact is that Srila Prabhupada possessed the highest respect and appreciation for Sridhar Maharaj and Sridhar Maharaj is unparalleled in his understanding and admiration of Srila Prabhupada. Especially his expansive, world-wide preaching success.

Sridhar Maharaj:[1973]"So our Swami Maharaj has done a miracle; he has done a miracle! Thakur Bhaktivinode conceived and our Prabhupada[Srila Bhaktisiddhanta] tried to translate this conception into action, and in his last days we find that through Swami Maharaj it has been fulfilled to such a great extent. We are happy, we are glad, we are proud!"

Srila Prabhupada:[crying]"So by guru-vaishnava, whatever position I have got; it is by guru's mercy and the blessings of the Vaishnava otherwise how I may...So, I wish that Sridhar Maharaj may bestow his blessings as he was doing always and may Guru Maharaj help me so I can do some service. by his grace it has become successful I have no credit. I do not know how things are happening, because I am not at all qualified, chadiya vaishnava seva nistara payeche keba [Without serving an ideal Vaishnava who can be delivered from the clutches of maya?]

And with full knowledge Sridhar Maharaj proudly and boldly proclaimed Srila Prabhupada as a Saktyavesh Avatar! [...when Krishna empowers some suitable living entity to represent Him, that living entity is called Saktyavesh Avatar. (TLC) "Whenever the Lord is present in someone by portions of His various potencies, the living entity representing the Lord is called Saktyavesh Avatar- that is an incarnation invested with special power."(Cc.Madhya-lila 20.373)

[August 18th, 1980] Sridhar Maharaj:I consider him to be Saktyavesh Avatar, and it is confirmed here[in his writings] on his spiritual journey through the Atlantic. And how he landed there[in America] and the nature of his beginning the movement[ISKCON] His intense degree of dedication to Krishna and dependence and how much he made himself empty[of any other desire than the order of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta] quite empty that Krishna came down to help him and it is corroborated that Krishna worked on his behalf. He had completely dedicated himself to the purpose, he was so earnest in his prayer to Krishna that he may discharge the duty that he has been given by his Guru Maharaj that Divine force power came down to help him. Otherwise it is impossible. It is not a thing of the ordinary level that anyone will do, but the highest thing has been taken down to the lowest position so extensively. It cannot but be the Divine power, embodied and in a great intensity and magnitude! So,Saktyavesh Avatar I take him I cannot but take him to be so."

With such appreciation there should be little doubt why Srila Prabhupada trusted Sridhar Maharaj. He had even heard directly from his Guru Maharaj, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta of the exceptional qualifications of Sridhar Maharaj. In their last known meeting in 1977 just prior to Srila Prabhupada's leaving this mortal world, we find Srila Prabhupada imploring Sridhar Maharaj to take up residence in Sridham Mayapur and offer some guidance to his disciples in his absence.[Translated from Bengali]

Srila Prabhupada: I do not know for how long I will be able to carry on. So I came to see Sridhar Maharaj.
Devotee: If you all go away, then the world will become dark.

Sridhar Maharaj:[to Srila Prabhupada] It is so wonderful that the will of the Lord becomes manifest through someone.

Srila Prabhupada: I very much want Maharaj, that you come and stay at Mayapur. Because Prabhupada [Srila Bhaktisiddhanta] always desired that you preach. He told me quite a few times, "Why don't you pull him out?" [Both Prabhupada and Sridhar Maharaj laugh] You know, I also tried to some extent before, but somehow or other it did not work out. Now why don't you come and stay at Mayapur?

Sridhar Maharaj: Atlast Prabhupada told me that you are an ease lover [laughter] the qualification, that you have...

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, it's true. He told me also that he [Sridhar Maharaj] is such a qualified person, one of the finest preachers. I want to take you everywhere. Atleast at the place we have in Mayapur people are coming from all over the world. Why don't you come and stay there? What is your objection in staying in Mayapur? If you just agree, then whatever kind of building you want, I will arrange it for you. They are trying to build a house for me, so both of us will stay there. And whenever you want you can come here. [Sridhar Maharaj's Math]

Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, as long as I am alive to fulfill Prabhupada's desire.

Srila Prabhupada: This is my earnest desire. Since you could not go around the world and preach, atleast stay there and people will come to you. I shall make that arrangement. If you stay then it will be helpful to me also. Sometimes I need to consult with someone but there is none. There is no one that I can consult. I feel this deficiency very greatly.

Devotee: If he stays in Mayapur, then all kinds of people will get to hear from him.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that's right.

Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, people from all kinds of cultural backgrounds will come there.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, they are already coming. And in that house I will make arrangements for lifts [elevators] so that you won't have to go through the difficulty of walking up and down the stairs. You won't even have to move a step yourself. I'll make arrangements for car and lift. Jaya-pataka is telling that he will build a house for me. So both of us will stay in that house.

Most of the time I am travelling around, so if you are there then they [Srila Prabhupada's disciples] can get some guidance. So Maharaj, please, give me the order and I will make all the arrangements for you.

Sridhar Maharaj: Well, I will have to think it over and let you know.

Srila Prabhupada: So let me make that arrangement Maharaj. That Planetarium also will be built under your direction. My idea is to combine the Indian culture and the American money—the lame man and the blind man policy. I tell them also that this will be very beneficial for the world. Indian culture and Varnashram Dharma. Prabhupada's desire was to establish the Varnashram Dharma. So we have to do that. We have to establish a Varnashram College. Let the people from all over the world come and learn about Varnashram."

In their final meeting Srila Prabhupada prophetically refers to his imminent "disappearance" and reveals that it is in this connection that he has come to see Sridhar Maharaj. In friendly jesting they discuss Sridhar Maharaj's reticence regarding large scale preaching work. Of himself Sridhar Maharaj has remarked, "I did not want to become a big person. That is not my nature. I did not want to move around with many people. I am just satisfied with whatever I have. My spiritual thinking is my life. The conclusions of the scriptures, the advices of the Mahajanas, to relish them and practice them and to discuss them in a small confidential circle, that is the main goal of my life." And thus Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's remark, "an ease lover." In the Ninth Canto of Srīmad Bhagavatam quoting Dhruva Maharaj Srila Prabhupada writes, "My dear Lord, I am fully satisfied with whatever You have given me. I have nothing to ask from You, for I am fully satisfied to be engaged in Your service." This is the mentality of a pure devotee, who does not want anything, material or spiritual, from the Personality of Godhead. Our Krishna consciousness movement is therefore called Kṛṣṇa-bhavanamṛta-saṅgha, the association of persons who are simply satisfied in thoughts of Krishna."

Srila Prabhupada testifies to his having personally heard Srila Bhaktisiddhanta mark the high qualifications of Sridhar Maharaj whom he had once requested to go to the West. In this regard Sridhar Maharaj remarked, "My Guru Maharaja wanted me to go to the West for preaching, but I modestly refused saying that I don't consider myself a fit person to preach in the West. Because you see I can't follow your intonation. So [laughing] I must listen clearly, then I shall tell. So in this way I told that if you order, I must go, but I don't think that I am fit to preach in the West. Anyhow it was stopped and Goswami Maharaj was sent to the West." Later, after he was selected a Godbrother came to Sridhar Maharaj and revealed, "Do you know why Guru Maharaja wanted you to be sent to the West? He said, 'Because he can't be converted.'"

Earlier in an appreciation of Sridhar Maharaj's poetry Srila Bhaktisiddhanta had surprisingly revealed, "Bhaktivinode Thakur has made him write this. Now I am satisfied that at least one man is left behind who will be able to represent my conception and distribute the instructions of Bhaktivinode Thakur." And just 24 hours before his departure from this mortal world Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarswati Thakur called for Sridhar Maharaj and asked him to sing the Narottama das Thakur song, "sri rupa manjari pada/ sei mora sampada" [The lotus feet of Sri Rupa Manjari are my treasure.] Sridhar Maharaj recalls, "So I did, I hesitatingly did. My nature is always hesitating, pushing back. Then Kunja Babu asked me to stop. I was not a good singer so as soon as he suggested I stopped. Then Kunja Babu asked Puri Maharaj of Kerala, "You sing." So he began. Then Prabhupada was a little disturbed. "I don't like to hear the sweet tune of the song." Then they stopped and I had to begin again, "sri rupa manjari pada/sei mora sampada." He wanted me to sing that song. That is the fulfillment of life of everyone of us, rupanuga. [to be followers of Sri Rupa.]

Expressing his appreciation for Sridhar Maharaj's "high realizations" in Krishna consciousness Srila Prabhupada says, "I want to take you everywhere. At least at the place we have in Mayapur people are coming from all over the world. Why don't you stay there?" Sometimes it is wondered why Sridhar Maharaj apparently did not take up Srila Prabhupada's offer. Sridhar Maharaj explains, "I said of course I shall try to help you. And not always, but occasionally that I admitted, sometimes I shall go and stay there with you. But really I did not think at the time that I shall survive him. So I did not give much attention to his words."

Finally Srila Prabhupada refers to "that planetarium." Sridhar Maharaj is very fond of Srila Sanatan Goswami's most famous work the Brihad Bhagavatamrta, in which devotees, devotional service and Krishna are described very scientifically. On the basis of this transcendental literature Sridhar Maharaj had contemplated an elaborate preaching exhibition, showing graphically with the use of dioramas depicting the varieties of material and spiritual planetary systems, how the ultimate spiritual destination is Krishna's own abode Goloka Brindaban. Due to insufficient funds Sridhar Maharaj humbly submitted his idea to Srila Prabhupada who approved saying that "it will be built under your direction." This is the largest single project ever undertaken in the history of ISKCON, which is to be supported internationally by ISKCON devotees from all over the world.

In conclusion, we humbly submit that the transcendental relationship between Srila Prabhupada and Sridhar Maharaj be understood and viewed on the basis of the authoritative evidence of guru, sadhu and sastra; as opposed to second hand rumors distorted half truths and hearsay from sources of doubtful character. In corroboration with the evidence that has been presented herein just prior to his departure from this mortal world Srila Prabhupada advised his leading secretaries that in his absence, when necessary Sridhar Maharaj should be approached for consultation. Sridhar Maharaj: Swami Maharaj himself requested me, not only once but several times, that you are to look after them. I did not think at the time that I shall survive him, so I did not give much attention to his words then, but repeatedly he told me that you are to look after those that I have brought to this side [Krishna consciousness] This I heard. And his plan was also that I shall there in Mayapur construct one quarter there and I have asked that another quarter just side by side for yourself, and you will have to stay there and I shall go abroad...you will have to take care. I told him it is not possible always but sometimes I shall go there and stay with you. Anyhow, Guru Maharaja wanted me to go to the West so it is natural that what we have got in us we should try to help the newcomers with that. It should be our fair duty only not that I shall become any anti-center. Anti-center, I am afraid of that. I rather hate or feel that it is beneath my dignity to stand against Swami Maharaja's campaign. I am very sensitive to that and feel distressed that Swami Maharaja's campaign would be affected in any way by me, my sentiment is like that. At the same time I find it as my duty, if anyone comes to me for real help, if I have capacity, then I cannot but help him. And especially those that cannot stand the present administrative system of ISKCON, if necessary to help them that is my idea.

So I have asked that anyone who came with that sort of object that my work will be that of a relieving nature. To start a relief work. Not a fighting campaign. Those that are disappointed, going away dejected, depressed, I should try to help them. They have come so near Mahaprabhu and Gurudeva, his teachings, Srimad Bhagavatam and they will go away? In that case I shall try to bring them back. "Don't go, come under the banner of Mahaprabhu and do relief work." And at the same time, consciously or unconsciously their standard cannot but improve. That some are going disassociating with us. What for? They are not satisfied? Their inquiry is not satisfied within us? So if we are to take them back then we must improve our quality also. They will have to keep up the quality. And the internal feuds we should avoid. "

Perhaps the first persons to approach Sridhar Maharaj for relief were Yasodanandan Swami and Pradyumna Prabhu, sometime in early 1978. Sridhar Maharaj recalls their visit, "...my heart aches to hear that many important persons are already becoming indifferent and many have vanished, like that gentleman whose reaction is very deplorable. I was known to him, that Pradyumna. First he came with eighteen points of objection, complaining against the present GBC and the Acharya Board. He said, "I represent the general body of the non-Acharya, non-GBC members. They are moving in this way and there are eighteen points of objection from us against them." I saw that many of them were not objectionable so I asked him to wait and see. Many of my friends I advised only wait and see. Don't do anything hurriedly. Hurriedly will have to repent. Especially when your Guru Maharaj Prabhupada [introduced to me] so many sincere and good friends, whom I cannot mention without a little difficulty in my mind, with some pain in my mind. According to me they are all sincere devotees who came. But they could not have any room within the fold of ISKCON and disappeared and some of them are prey to reaction I am told. United we stand divided we fall. But it is providence, what can I do?"

Since the first signs of dissension we find Sridhar Maharaj cautioning the dissenting party to "wait and see", remain tolerant and not to do anything that would be against the decisions of the governing body. Always respecting the GBC as the "ultimate managing authority for the entire International Society for Krishna consciousness" Sridhar Maharaj as a third party has most often expertly pleaded the position of the GBC much to the surprise of the challenging party. Simultaneously he has expressed his remorse that so many sincere souls are going away from the organization, losing their purity of life and that to somehow or other accomodate them would be better; Similarly Srila Prabhupada advises in a 1969 letter to Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami, "...so in the future we can form a central governing body for the whole institution. Therefore the management should be done very cautiously so that everyone is satisfied in their autonomous managing capacity... You should always deal things so tactfully that people may not fall away. Every being is important in Krishna conscious service, and we must take all precautions that one may not fall away."

Rendering the highest service to ISKCON, in October of 1980 Sridhar Maharaj singlehandedly, successfully averted a major split in the society, restoring a united front. When asked how ISKCON could continue to maintain this unity he advised, "trnad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada hari. The spirit of toleration that should be spread amongst you. If we want to work in a group, sankirtan then this sort of qualification is essential and inevitable. This sort of characteristic should be maintained and given more attention, if we want to work in a group. Toleration and humility otherwise combinedly we cannot take up any big work. And amamina manadena, the tendency to give honor to others and not to seek honor for himself. Especially pratistha, the hitch is in pratistha in name and fame and to maintain one's own position. By attempting to maintain my own position I cannot keep position. These sort of things should be educated amongst the members of the organization. By seeking position we may not attain position. Sometimes by not seeking position but by giving position to others we can get position." Similarly Srila Prabhupada writes in a 1973 letter to Srila Bhaktipada and other leading devotees, "Now this displeasing of Godbrothers has already begun and gives me too much agitation in my mind. Our Gaudiya Math people fought with one another after the demise of Guru Maharaj but my disciples have already begun fighting even in my presence. So I am greatly concerned about it. Following in the footprints of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: trnad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada hari. We must always remember this verse and be as tolerant as the tree, as we execute the Krishna consciousness movement. Without this mentality we cannot be successful.

Material nature means dissension and disagreement, especially in this Kali Yuga. But for this Krishna consciousness movement it's success will depend on agreement, even though there are varieties of engagements. In the material world there are varieties but there is no agreement. In the spiritual world there are varieties, but there is agreement. That is the difference. The materialist without being able to adjust the varieties and the disagreements makes everything zero. They cannot come into agreement with varieties, but if we keep Krishna in the center, then there will be agreement in varieties. This is called unity in diversity. I am therefore suggesting that all our men meet in Mayapur every year during the birth anniversary of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. With all GBC and senior men present we should discuss how to make unity in diversity. But if we fight on account of diversity then it is simply the material platform. Please try to maintain the philosophy of unity in diversity. That will make our movement successful. One section of men have already gone out, therefore we must be very careful to maintain unity in diversity and remember the story of Aesop's Fables, of the father of many children with the bundle of sticks. When the father asked the children to break the bundle of sticks wrapped in a bag, none of them could do it. But when they removed the sticks from the bag and tried one by one, the sticks were easily broken. So this is the strength of unity. If we are bunched up we can never be broken, but when divided, then we can become broken very easily."

The question often arises, which is of more importance convincing newcomers to become devotees or maintaining those that have already come to the Krishna consciousness movement.

In a letter to Srila Satsvarupa das Goswami, Srila Prabhupada stresses, "You mention you like to speak now very often, but the first business should be to preach to the devotees. It is better to maintain a devotee than to try and convince others to become devotees. It is the duty of the GBC to maintain the devotees [underlining of maintain is Srila Prabhupada's] keep them in the highest standard of Krishna consciousness and give them all good instruction, and let them go out and preach for making more devotees."

In a 1972 letter to Karandhar Prabhu Srila Prabhupada cautions his leaders to "be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service."

"Do not centralise anything. Each temple must remain independent and self sufficient. That was my plan from the beginning, why you are thinking otherwise. Once before you wanted to do something centralising with your GBC meeting and if I did not interfere the whole thing would have been killed...Krishna consciousness movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action not for making bureaucracy. Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing will be spoiled. There must always be individual striving and work and responsibility, competitive spirit, not that one shall dominate and distribute benefits to the others and they do nothing but beg from you and you provide. The point is to be engaged in doing something for Krishna, nevermind what is that job, but being so engaged in doing something so satisfying to the devotee that he remains always enthusiastic...our leaders shall be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service, which is individual spontaneous and voluntary. They should always try to generate some atmosphere of fresh challenge to the devotees so that they will enthusiastically agree to rise and meet it. This is the art of management: to draw out spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Krishna."

Similarly in a conversation in 1981 Sridhar Maharaj advised, "So ISKCON should not suffer from the indifference or negligence or abhorrence of the non-acharya disciples of Swami Maharaj. There may be qualified disciples outside the Acharya Board and GBC. It is not impossible. So we should sit together and try to evolve that valuable persons that came to serve Swami Maharaj with all their energy and sincerity, they will go away, it is very regrettable. We should try to save the mission from that great disaster. I hear that so many stalwarts, they are going to the unknown quarter. They are depressed because they do not see a fair field. So these things should not be set aside but it must be taken in and they should be discussed. Some salient points you should prepare, a table. That these are the list of disadvantages and inconveniences. Rather this disease has entered ISKCON and how to treat it. This is our common cause, we are interested in ISKCON, we are members, we have given our life, dedicated our life for this mission. We don't like it that our Godbrothers will go astray dissatisfied with the management. So try our best how we can evolve some rulings or some sort of laws, rules

which should guide us all. Accomodate us all. At the same time it will push the cause of the mission of ISKCON. As dynamic as it is accomadative, comprehensive mission we want to have. We have a great field ahead. We must go to the length and breadth of this world with the banner of our Guru Maharaj, Prabhupada, Swami Maharaj and we must have a combined effort for that. Nothing we like to lose. We should collect all our energy, money, men and we must go on with the banner of our Prabhupada. For this unity a fairness in the field is necessary, that which will strengthen the heart of all the members of ISKCON. In this way you may put into the GBC's meeting that such an accomadating and dynamic program we want to have. We like to have. And without doing we won't allow you to dissolve your meeting. Please come to such a conclusion and give us such a program. Provide food to feed all the members. Every one of us must have food, proper food to work on. Evolve such a program and give it to us. If you consider yourselves to be the efficient, then give us this thing. Then we can march on with the flag, with our head erect. We are going to capture new men and the old are already going back? They are being driven away, the old and important members that got the grace of our Guru Maharaj, they are being discouraged and indifferent. And we are going to recruit new persons? Is it not a farce?

So a little strongly I am speaking, but as a friend of your Guru Maharaj I feel in my heart, so I say this. This world-wide grand mission that will thrive like anything. It will touch the heaven and cover the world and other planets also. And what is this? The old persons, they are going back? There may be one a few exceptions, but generally people came with a good and sincere heart and they are feeling discouragement so some encouraging program must be. This we want to have. So let us evolve. Not a formal meeting for two days, three days but a meeting to satisfy the real necessity of the day. That is a living committee we should have. A living meeting we want. Not a formal meeting after one year a formal meeting and some resolutions passed and everyone is gone to his own field and doing as he likes."

Specifically in regard to the expansion of Acharyas Sridhar Maharaj commented, "Expansion, not very lavishly but must have some provisions for extention and the fit persons should be accepted to show the dynamic character of the mission. Then there will be hope or prospect and the people may wait and they may not leave the mission thinking, "We have got no prospect no hope here, so let us go and seek our fortune elsewhere." So there should be some openness and the bona fide person may be accepted, even after the departure of your Guru Maharaj because we shall have to [extend] if we shall want to continue. When we are old sufficiently, we will give it to our disciple section. So why cannot we on principle extend it to our brothers. Already we are many; the number may be increased, so that many of the qualified Godbrothers they will have some hope, they will stick, they will render service, they will be kept in. We must get the chance to my hearts content to give it to the world. And to hanker for the chance, that is not always pratistha that I want position, not that. The sincere necessity within the heart may also be there. The feeling of necessity that I must

do something of higher service towards my guru.

So that sort of feeling must be encouraged. Such a broad basis there must be in the mission. This is my opinion.

GBC Member: Our Srila Prabhupada said "...as the need arises."

Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, as the need arises, the numbers of soldiers should be increased. Just as now they are doing, the military expenses are increasing day after day, year after year, they are increasing the military expense to fight with the opposition.

So the need of spiritual soldiers are wanted, so that from village to village everyone, in every place should be hunted and approached, "Take the name of Krishna! And come under the flag of Mahaprabhu and Swami Maharaja!"

So let us go to every man in every village and approach them. This is life and this will show the vitality of the mission."

In regard to the GBC decision not to extend the Acharyaship he controversially remarked, "In regards to my personal opinion I think that the decision is unhappy and injudicious, the decision of the GBC is unhappy and injudicious, it seems to me. And the consequence will be that many independent Acharyas will spring up will stand up as the result of this bigoted policy. This is my personal opinion. And I wanted to save ISKCON from such a reaction. They should be accomadating and expanding. They should expand themselves. They are doing in a particular way they are making disciples , expansions. So from outside ISKCON and with some little knowledge we have got, in my life and with all sincerity I wanted to help ISKCON that the organization may go on with it's prestige. They can go on for some time, safely. But Divine will must work in It's own way. In Hegelian language thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Whenever anything happens some opposite happenings occur. And then again greater synthesis is the outcome in the future. So we must submit to the inevitable. Sometimes what we do not do willingly, voluntarily, we are forced to do that , with some punishment. Not always, let us wait and see what way the Divine Will goes. Divine, the sweet will of Krishna. What way he passes. Let us wait and see.

The only difficulty is that so many sincere souls, they are going away from the organization and they cannot keep there position while single and they are going down. That is our sorrow. Otherwise it does not matter whether there is eleven Acharyas or one Acharya, it does not matter. But those that have come under the banner of Swami Maharaj, if they loses their purity of life, that is to be mourned for. Only this much that is what is aching me. I knew some of them personally. And I advised them all wait and see, don't go to strike any volatile...don't take any adverse step—wait submissively. But after all His will will go on. That is our solace. Our consolation. It may not suit or please me, my heart, but I cannot expect that all events will satisfy me. His will should be satisfied at any cost. So patiently we shall have to take what happens, We won't allow ourselves to be perturbed much as to do something which will be against this decision. Though not with full heart, still we shall try to accomadate with it. That should be better according to me. But when God is wishing it may take another way at any time.

Our solace will be that His will may not be challenged or may not be opposed. Let us try to be happy with the decision and He will see. We should not allow ourselves to be identified with any disturbing element, that may go against the organization built up by Swami Maharaj. So toleration, that will be laudable according to me. So wait and see. His sweet will may move this side that side, in my favor, against me but still I must submit to that Supreme Absolute Will. Hare Krishna.

Let us hope that their decision may help ISKCON, by the will of Krishna it may not bring any disaster to the organization. Let us hope and pray. ISKCON is a new born child, a new born child. There may be so many child-enemies. So we shall pray to the Lord that the child may grow to be a strong young man and do the desired service of it's founder, Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj. With his good wishes; we shall pray to him. It is a great campaign, the highest campaign the world has ever seen. Expansion of the creed of love of the Absolute in the religious sky. So it's expansion, it's happy movement is to be wished and prayed by all. Mahaprabhu's grace may reach to every unknown corner of the world. And so many souls may receive that nectar. Hare Krishna!"

It was this statement that drew strong objection from some of the leading GBC members. Feeling that Sridhar Maharaj might not have been properly informed regarding the GBC decision not to increase the number of Acharyas, Srila Jayapataka Swami and Srila Bhavananda Goswami approached Sridhar Maharaj and read to him the GBC position paper entitled, "The Descending Process of Selecting a Spiritual Master." In response wanting to clarify his position to them Sridhar Maharaj remarked, "I am not wholly one with ISKCON and even not wholly one with Swami Maharaj." When asked why he remarked in such a way he answered, "The meaning is like this: Last time I told them, they wanted me, that what they will do, I shall give ditto to that. Then I told them 'Do you think that I am under your committee? No, no, no I am not going to take that position. The day before yesterday also the same thing. [referring to hearing the "Descending Process of Selecting a Spiritual Master" position paper] They said we had a meeting and in our meeting we accepted the principle that the Acharya number may be increased but we did not receive any inspiration this year for extension but this was not told to you, so we are told that you remarked that our decision is injudicious and unfortunate. I said yes, I did remark in such a way because I want to clear my position to you now. That I am not one, wholly one with ISKCON and even not wholly one with Swami Maharaj. I have got my special consideration and inclination and thinking and with the other Godbrothers also I differ in many ways so every one has got his special characteristic and I also have such. So what you think to be srota-pantha [the line of descent] in your meeting, your unanimous verdict, what you think that is coming down, the right thing coming down, I am not bound to pronounce the same thing, that it is infallible. The meaning is like that.

According to my consideration, your combined decision was a faulty one. I did not say so clearly but that was my real opinion. Because you have come to a common, unanimous resolution so everyone will have to give ditto to that. I am not a party

like that. I have got my independent opinion, independent realization and suggestions. That is my point, some special consideration everyone has got."

When asked about the differences Sridhar Maharaj said:
 "The other day I told that I am not one with ISKCON and not even one with Swami Maharaj. He is a very big man of world renown and I am a insignificant person, none knows me and you all who have got some touch with me, that also is in connection with Swami Maharaj. He is like a sun and I may be compared with a glow-worm. And with such boldness and pushing character and huge capacity he conquered the whole of the world. So much so that I cannot but see the Divine potency came down to work on his behalf. So tremendous and wonderful service he has shown to his Guru Maharaj and to the world. He distributed nectar like water. And what we are doing? Still everyone has got his special thinking and consideration, as you among your Godbrothers also have, we also among our Godbrothers; no two things are exactly equal and identical. All have got some special characteristic."

In the fourth canto of Srimad Bhagavatam Srila Prabhupada has written, "Among Vaisnavas there may be some difference of opinion due to everyone's personal identity, but despite all personal differences, the cult of Krishna consciousness must go on. We can see that under the instructions of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaja began preaching the Krishna consciousness movement in an organized way within the past hundred years. The disciples of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaja are all Godbrothers, and although there are some differences of opinion, and although we are not acting conjointly everyone of us is spreading this Krishna consciousness movement according to his capacity and producing many disciples to spread it all over the world." [S.B.4.28.31]

Elsewhere in the Caitanya-caritamrta Srila Prabhupada writes "Every Acharya has a specific means of propagating his spiritual movement with the aim of bringing men to Krishna consciousness. Therefore the method of one Acharya may be different from that of another, but the ultimate goal is never neglected." [Cc. Adi-lila 7.37]

Finally Sridhar Maharaj has clearly stated that he does not want to disturb ISKCON. It should be noted that Sridhar Maharaj has never interfered with the activities of ISKCON but has been approached at different times by Gurus, GBC members, sannyasis and other leading devotees who were in apparent need of help. In this connection Sridhar Maharaj reminds us, "I don't want to create any party there in competition with ISKCON. Only those that are lead astray, disappointed, dejected, if any help I can give to them from my side, if it will be beneficial, I am ready for that only. Is it not? So why I should not do that minimum thing that those that came under the banner of Swami Maharaj, dejected they are going away, should we deal indifferently with them? I don't like that they will go away, so some help to them. And that is also in connection with ISKCON and not independently. But if ISKCON wants to cut off the connection what can I do?"

When approached by Srila Prabhupada's disciples in regard to the proper mood to approach the GBC Sridhar Maharaj feelingly submitted, "We shall try in this way, that I don't want to disturb others. I don't know how far I am fallible or infallible, but still what I think to be the best I cannot but do that. I cannot be a hypocrite for my whole life. I can wait for some time but the whole life I cannot go against my own consciousness. That should be the position. We must save myself, but we may not be a party, because I am not above faults. Not above ignorance or imperfect knowledge. So it will be sober to wait and see what leads to what. And in the meantime there are persons who are of my temperament, I can mix with them and humbly we may submit that these are our complaints and if you see it good and well then they should be removed, because it is not my individual case but the case of so many well meaning disciples of Guru Maharaja Godbrothers. So you should consider these points and do the necessary and save us. Don't think that we are insincere and are trying to fulfill some evil purpose. But our thinking is of the highest type. And anyhow you are going at large to help other people but we are already in your fold, don't neglect us, don't neglect us, deal properly with us, we are already in the fold. And you are going at large to collect men, and you should do so and we are also eager to help you in that matter. But we have got this sort of weakness in our minds. Please, you stalwarts you have been given the confidence of guiding ISKCON, the responsibility has been put on your head by our Guru Maharaja, so do justice to his disciples, your Godbrothers. Don't neglect us, we are well meaning."

EPILOGUE

"Although one may be well versed in the transcendental science one should be careful about the offense of maryada-vyatikrama or impertinently surpassing a greater personality. According to scriptural injunction one should be very careful of transgressing the law of maryada-vyatikrama because by so doing one loses his duration of life, his opulence, fame and piety and the blessings of the world. To be well versed in the transcendental science necessitates awareness of the techniques of spiritual science...The rule is that in the presence of a higher personality one should not be very eager to impart instructions, even if one is competent and well versed...The Lord never tolerates the impertinence of maryada-vyatikrama. One should never pass over the honor due to an elderly spiritual master..." [S.B.3.4.26]