

From Sri Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir

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Speaker: HH Bhakti Charu Swami

Subject: Disappearance day of HH Tamal Krishna Goswami

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HH Bhakti Charu Swami

Hare Krishna. When Srila Prabhupada went to the West, Krishna actually created the perfect arrangement for Srila Prabhupada. The United States of America, at that time, was in a perfect situation to receive Srila Prabhupada. If we look at the history of America, then we can see that soon after the second world war, America reached the height of its material prosperity. At the same time, the youth of America became disillusioned. They saw that money cannot buy everything. Especially the most important need for everybody - love. Money cannot buy love. Other situations also created a situation where American youth became disillusioned and disgruntled. They started to look for a positive alternative. They started to wonder what would make their lives worth living.

In the mid 60's we see that America was going through a very special phase, like the counter culture. They were searching for a positive alternative. At that time, they were thinking to find that positive alternative through sex and drugs. Many of the youth at that time actually left a life of prosperity, comfort, and materialistic achievements. They came to the streets.

It was around that time when Srila Prabhupada arrived in America. It was a perfect situation, in 1965, the height of the counter culture movement. Srila Prabhupada gave them the real positive alternative to the materialistic way of life. What was that? Krishna Consciousness. We see that so many young American boys and girls became attracted to Srila Prabhupada. Many of them are present here. They came forward, being attracted by Srila Prabhupada's wonderful personality. This is how the Krishna Consciousness movement started in America.

At 26 Second avenue, Srila Prabhupada established the first ISKCON center. He registered the institution of ISKCON at a small little storefront, but he called it the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. We can see what a vision Srila Prabhupada had. Actually, it was really a vision, a vision into the future. Srila Prabhupada knew what was going to happen. A saintly personality like Prabhupada is a trikaladarshi. He can see the time in its three aspects: past, present, and future.

We see only the present. And the past is a hazy memory. The future lies in a dreamworld. Srila Prabhupada had a perfect vision. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness. When the movement was established in America, Prabhupada went to the West coast, San Francisco, Golden Gate Park, Haight Ashbury, the kingdom, the perfect world of the youth of America. All of the youth from America were converging in San Francisco. Srila Prabhupada saw that this was the real field for his preaching.

Srila Prabhupada went to the West coast. In that respect we must remember that Mukunda Maharaj played a very significant role. He is the one who got the 26 Second Avenue storefront for Srila Prabhupada. Then Srila Prabhupada sent him to the West coast to start another center like that in the thick of the youth culture of America in Haight Ashbury. There, the youth culture of America again became naturally attracted to Srila Prabhupada.

Among them was Tamal Krishna Maharaj. He joined Srila Prabhupada in 1968. Srila Prabhupada went to a place where the young Americans were living in the redwood forest near San Francisco. He was so aloof from the materialistic culture that he was living in the forest. But Srila Prabhupada went to that place and it was just love at first sight. He left everything. Even that commune that he was living in. He came with Srila Prabhupada to San Francisco after one meeting, maybe even just one sight of Srila Prabhupada, attracted him to his lotus feet.

Then we see what an important role that he played in the Krishna Consciousness movement. It was as if he was just sent by Caitanya Mahaprabhu to assist Srila Prabhupada. Actually, Srila Prabhupada at one time, I remember, one devotee was lamenting about his past. He was telling Prabhupada that his life was so sinful. Srila Prabhupada said, "As soon as I called, you came."

Whatever they were doing was not really important. They were just waiting for Srila Prabhupada to come to America and then they came. Srila Prabhupada himself said that these boys and girls were sent by his spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. These young Americans were sent by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to assist him in his mission.

When we see the life and activities of Tamal Krishna Maharaj, we see how much he had done for Srila Prabhupada. He was in the front line all of the time. At that time, in Los Angeles they had bought a Temple, a church. And who would be the President? Who did Srila Prabhupada select to be the President of the most important place for ISKCON? Tamal Krishna Maharaj.

Around that time, Shyamasundara Prabhu and Mukunda Maharaj and Gurudasa Prabhu, along with their wives Malati Mataji, Yamuna Mataji, and Janaki Mataji, had developed some relationship with

the Beatles, mainly George Harrison. At that time, George Harrison and the Beatles were the most important people in the world of the youth. The whole youth of the world was bouncing with their music. This George Harrison became attracted to Krishna Consciousness. When things started to develop there in London, Srila Prabhupada sent Tamal Krishna Maharaj. Not so much to cultivate George Harrison, but to establish the Sankirtan Movement, to start book distribution. In London, then Paris, then Frankfurt, Tamal Krishna Maharaj started to establish the Krishna Consciousness movement in those areas.

This land where we are sitting, where we are situated today, initially there were a lot of difficulties to get the land because some people here did not want us to come. They did not want Srila Prabhupada to come and establish a center here. There were a lot of difficulties to get a piece of land. The buyers would come, somebody in the interest to sell the land, but then somebody would come and dissuade him from the deal. Two or three times the deals fell through. But then Tamal Krishna Maharaj was sent by Srila Prabhupada and he succeeded.

He made all of the arrangements. He came here with a lawyer, sat under a banyan tree which is by the side of the road, and signed the deal. Tamal Krishna Maharaj told me that at midnight he alerted Calcutta. Srila Prabhupada was still awake waiting for him to come back. He offered the agreement, the sell deed, to Srila Prabhupada.

I also had the good fortune of seeing Tamal Krishna Maharaj for the first time here in Mayapur. I remember my roommate was one American devotee, Tirthapada Prabhu. I saw Bhavananda Prabhu and another person, a very bright looking and handsome individual. They were walking. I remember the first sight and I immediately offered obeisances. It was so overwhelming. The sight was so impressive. My heart was immediately filled with appreciation and respect for him.

Srila Prabhupada was here at that time. That was in 1977. Tamal Krishna Maharaj became Srila Prabhupada's secretary. I was just a new devotee at that time, but during our first meeting Srila Prabhupada asked me to translate his books into Bengali. So I was translating his books and I had easy access to Srila Prabhupada. At those days, to go near Srila Prabhupada was practically impossible. Thousands of devotees were surrounding him, dying to have his darshan. So it was very difficult to get anywhere near Srila Prabhupada. Because of this service, I had the good fortune to approach Srila Prabhupada whenever I wanted it. Everybody knew that I was translating. Srila Prabhupada was actually guiding me. He was training me up.

One day while I was translating, Srila Prabhupada gave me a stack of Bengali letters. He asked me to reply to them. When I finished replying to those Bengali letters, Srila Prabhupada gave me a stack of

Hindi letters to reply to. Srila Prabhupada used to give me the dictation and I used to handwrite them. Then Srila Prabhupada used to sign them.

In this way, when I started to reply to those letters, one day Srila Prabhupada told me that he was appointing me as his secretary for Indian affairs. Then he called Tamal Krishna Maharaj, who was his secretary at that time. He called Tamal Krishna Maharaj and told him about the appointment and suggested that I move into the room where Tamal Krishna Maharaj was staying. So that gave me another inconceivable good fortune - to be with Tamal Krishna Maharaj.

It was on top the Lotus building where we were sharing one room. That was an inconceivable good fortune for me. I had the good fortune of being trained up by him. He was so exemplary. I remember he used to get up every day at three o'clock. When he would get up, he would switch on Srila Prabhupada's tape. He would go to the bathroom and this tape was playing. I used to wake up hearing it. It was so nice to wake up lying in the bed listening to Prabhupada's tapes. Then Tamal Krishna Maharaj used to come out of the bathroom and then I would go.

We had a very wonderful relationship. I always treated him like my elder brother. He was so senior. Although, according to materialistic calculations, he is six months younger than me. I was born in September of 1945. Tamal Krishna Maharaj was born in March of 1946. So in that way it made him six months junior. When he found out, he was kind of joking, he said, "You're a senior to me, but I treat you like my junior." I used to tell him that, "You are so far advanced, so much senior to me." He was serving Srila Prabhupada so nicely.

This is how I had the good fortune of sharing a room with him wherever we went. From Mayapur we went to Bombay, from Bombay we went to Rishikesh, from Rishikesh we went to Vrindavan. Wherever we went we would always stay in the same room. Even if I said, "No, no, you stay in that room by yourself," he insisted that I come stay with him.

Even after Srila Prabhupada left, when Tamal Krishna Maharaj would come to Mayapur, he would share the room with me. He used to come and stay in my room until he got his room here in the Conch building. Although I always had a lot of respect for him, he would treat me like a friend.

I remember in Rishikesh sometimes we used to go for a walk. Srila Prabhupada was in Rishikesh. A few of us were with Srila Prabhupada. Sometimes in the afternoon Tamal Krishna Maharaj and I would go for a walk. We used to go across the Lakshman Jhula, across the Ganges, and then would go upstream. One day we walked like that and then we sat on a boulder on the bank of the river.

Tamal Krishna Maharaj was telling me, "You're so fortunate to be born in India. Just to take your birth in India, you have come so close to the Vedic culture and to Krishna Consciousness."

I said, "Well that may be, but that's not me." I was not at all close to Indian culture in those days before I came to Krishna Consciousness. We were brought up with the understanding that the West is the best. So that was the culture. I was telling him, "The way you are serving Srila Prabhupada, I can very clearly see that you have been sent by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to assist Srila Prabhupada." He laughed and said, "You don't know my background."

Sometimes we had some very nice encounters also. Tamal Krishna Maharaj was known for his temper. He had another name which was Hot Tamale, because he has such a hot temper. When he used to get angry it was really something. He didn't get angry with me so often though.

In those days, I was a brahmachari. From Mayapur we went to Bombay. He was a little annoyed with me. I don't want to go into the details. He started to blast me. Finally he said, "I curse you that you'll get married!" In those days, for us to get married was something like the worst thing that could happen to a brahmachari. I was completely devastated. I went to Srila Prabhupada and told him that Tamal Krishna Maharaj cursed me that I would get married. Prabhupada replied, "You're already married. Go tell him that you're already married to Krishna."

In this way, we had so many wonderful encounters with him. At the bottom of it, the reality of it is that he was very affectionate to me, and I had a lot of respect for him. We had a deep bond between us. Sometimes there was an expression, "Tamal's man." I feel proud to admit that I am "Tamal's man." He was always very protective.

So today is Tamal Krishna Maharaj's disappearance. I want to end the class with one point. Tamal Krishna Maharaj's disappearance was very sudden. For six years, Tamal Krishna Maharaj did not come to Mayapur to attend the GBC meeting. He was studying. First, he did his undergraduate course in America. Then, he was doing his PhD in Cambridge. After completing that, he came to Mayapur after six years. He had so many ideas. He wanted to set up a University in Calcutta and eventually extend it to Mayapur. But all of a sudden, he was gone. Some of us had the feeling that Tamal Krishna Maharaj

knew that he was going to leave.

I had an experience just about two or three days before Tamal Krishna Maharaj left his body. We were chanting together in his room. Tamal Krishna Maharaj stopped and said, "Take care of those

boys in Calcutta." He had a few disciples there. "You are their father." I said, "No, I am the uncle. You are the father." He said again, "No, no. You are their father." He went on like that for some time. I could not understand why he was speaking like that because every body knows that the spiritual master is the father and that his godbrothers are the uncles.

This was one indication that I had that he knew that he was going to leave. He was requesting that I take care of his boys.

All glories to His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami Maharaj. Gaura Premanande Haribol.