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The Story of a Cheater - The Real Facts on the Sulocana Story

The purpose of the following paper is two-fold. First, we wish to expose the real character and activities of this rascal who goes by the name of Sulocana, or more appropriately, by his karmi name, Steve Bryant. We wish to demonstrate beyond any doubt his excessive cruelty and irrational behavior which led to the dissolution of his marriage and the estrangement of his former wife, Yamuna dasi. In doing this we will also accomplish our second objective- to clear the name of His Divine Grace Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada of the groundless charges which Sulocana has leveled against him, specifically that Srila Bhaktipada was responsible for the disintegration of Sulocana's marriage.

IN LONDON

We should begin this story in 1979, in London, England. At that time Steve was living outside the London temple. His Krsna conscious sadhana was almost nil, and he was known to be associating with drug addicts. He was a steady movie-goer and a regular patron of the local pubs. Through a friend, he was introduced to a young aspiring devotee, Yamuna dasi, who was at that time Jane Rangeley. Although he was not following the regulative principles, he presented himself to her as a fixed-up devotee. Here, in the first instance of his cheating, we find the foundation upon which his marriage rested, and from which countless other lies and misrepresentations fructify, many that continue down to the present day.

With the help of a friend, Steve persuaded Yamuna that she should marry him, preaching to her that since he was a devotee, marriage to him would help her advance in Krsna consciousness. At the time he was not following even a basic Krsna conscious program. Furthermore, no temple authority was consulted about the marriage. She had not even the slightest inclination towards him, and indeed found him quite unlikeable and "puffed up." But, after only a brief two weeks' acquaintance with Steve, Yamuna agreed to marry him, a decision she now regrets as the greatest blunder of her life.

Shortly after the marriage, they moved into an incense warehouse(?!), where she recalls being subjected to an endless series of his warped "trips" such as being physically beaten daily if she did not memorize a certain literary passage of his choosing. At this time he began persecuting her two-year old son, denying him food because he could not enunciate a word properly, and separating him from his mother because he deemed the boy "too attached" to her. Steve forced Yamuna to discontinue breast feeding her child abruptly, although weaning a child is harmful if not done gradually. Needless to say, the poor child was often in total hysterics due to such maltreatment. On one occasion, Steve insisted upon cutting part of the child's tongue, thinking this a cure for a speech impediment which Steve imagined the child to possess. Fortunately, Steve was dissuaded by the boy's mother and desisted from the heinous act. Today the child speaks normally.

"After some time, I became so totally repulsed by the guy," Yamuna recalls, "that I didn't want him anywhere near me." Still, he would regularly force her to have sexual intercourse. In her own words, "He seemed sexually preoccupied, and frustrated."

At this time he began a daily practice of slapping her across the face. Sometimes he would slap her upon a slight provocation, such as a

difference of opinion. But usually he would just slap her for no apparent reason, unexpectedly, and sometimes in front of friends, thus increasing her embarrassment and torment. This practice continued through most of the duration of their marriage.

Yamuna remembers that he was extremely unsettled in mind and incessantly vacillated from one conclusion to another. Thus he never committed himself to anything. One case in point was Yamuna's initiation. Any devotee who has read Srila Prabhupada's books knows that a serious candidate in spiritual life must seek out a bona fide spiritual master and accept initiation from him. tad vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigachet - IT IS ESSENTIAL; one MUST have a spiritual master if he desires to perfect his life. Being a sincere devotee, Yamuna quite naturally wanted to accept initiation from a bona fide spiritual master. Steve, when questioned, would routinely reply that he wanted her to take initiation from His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktipada. "He told me ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS that he liked Srila Bhaktipada, and I should take initiation from him," Yamuna recalls. But Steve was mentally unstable, or "wishy-washy" in Yamuna's words, and often he would say that he wasn't sure women should take initiation at all. For a while he was thinking that perhaps she should take initiation from Tirthapada. Still, for the majority of the times when initiation was discussed, Srila Bhaktipada was the decided choice.

In the fall of 1980, as Steve prepared to go to India for a second time that year, it was agreed upon that Yamuna should go to New Vrindavana to live. Leaving her with £20 and a bag full of pendants to sell, he left for India. Before leaving, he also gave her a letter of introduction which said, in effect, "Here is my wife, she is coming here to live and possibly to take initiation. I shall be coming there in about four or five months."

Yamuna was pregnant at the time, and was caring for her three-year old son Krsna dasa. Still, unassisted, she traveled to France where she managed to sell enough pendants to purchase passage to America for herself and her small boy. Finally, in late 1980, Yamuna arrived in New Vrindavana.

IN NEW VRINDAVANA

"My first impression of New Vrindavana was that I immediately fell in love with everything. I thought, 'This is just like Vrindavana.' I thought that living here was the closest thing to living in Vrindavana." - Yamuna dasi

Arriving in New Vrindavana just a few weeks before Christmas, Yamuna was at once caught up in the intense engagement of the Christmas marathon. The devotees were at once impressed by her sincerity and hard-working determination, as well as by the high level of Krsna consciousness of her son, Krsna dasa. She enjoyed living here, made many friends, and performed various services with her characteristic care and attentiveness.

A few weeks later, the annual New Vrindavana Christmas festival took place, and Yamuna intended to take initiation from Srila Bhaktipada. She had been practicing the rules of Krsna Consciousness and chanting sixteen rounds for over a year and a half. As far as she knew (in as much as one could be sure of anything Steve believed or

wanted), Steve also wanted her to be initiated by Srila Bhaktipada. Thinking in this way she wrote a letter to Srila Bhaktipada, formally requesting initiation. Out of his unlimited kindness and compassion, Srila Bhaktipada agreed. On Christmas day, Yamuna accepted initiation.

Immediately afterwards, Yamuna wrote to Steve, who was still in India, informing him of the initiation, and confident of his approval. Two weeks later, she received a letter from him that he had apparently sent before receiving her previous communique. The letter stated: "Bhaktipada is a pure devotee of God no doubt. All the same a chaste wife means fully devoted to the husband and this I require. ... I'm devoted to Prabhupada and Bhaktipada...and you can be also but only through me and not independently." At this point we see the beginning of his concocted idea of being her only spiritual master, despite his admission in the very same letter that "I've never denied my fallen condition." His conclusion: wait.

Later she received another letter from him stating that he had received her letter, and that he approved of her initiation by Srila Bhaktipada. This is a good example of his unsteadiness and indecisive nature. Although he had some reservations, he did approve, at least at different times, of her being initiated.

Steve came to New Vrindavana in the Spring of 1981, and for some time appeared to be serious in his attempt to become Krsna conscious, although he was regularly going out at night with a friend, and was known to be going to movies. By early winter he was again drinking beer and watching television nightly. His sadhana consisted of going to the temple once a week. As far as Yamuna knows, Steve NEVER CHANTED 16 ROUNDS of japa a day. At the times when he was doing better, he might chant for an hour in the morning, but if there were any distractions, he would also neglect that.

One night he came home with a six-pack of beer, and put it in the refrigerator. Yamuna protested strongly, but he would not relent, and even tried to convince her that drinking beer was alright. He would often eat preparations containing eggs indiscriminately. It was also at this time that he forbade Yamuna to read Srila Prabhupada's books, or to attend the temple Bhagavatam classes. Yamuna reasons that he felt she was becoming detached from sex life, and her reading the Bhagavatam was the cause. Thus he forbade her to read. Steve also told her that it wasn't necessary for her to chant 16 rounds. At this time, Yamuna was going to the morning program practically every day, reading, and chanting her rounds, despite the overload of work that he placed upon her. He, on the other hand, went to mangala arotika only once a week, and HE NEVER READ ANY OF PRABHUPADA'S BOOKS as long as they were married, except when he was being paid to index them.

Things continued in this way for a long time. He continued routinely slapping her, coercing her into sex although she was not inclined, minimizing the importance of her sadhana, and setting the worst possible example for her.

IN CALIFORNIA

In October, 1982, he abruptly decided to pick up and move to California. Yamuna was extremely upset and cried for days. "I was totally flipped out for two months after we left," Yamuna recalls. Still, in her desperate attempt to remain a chaste wife, she was obliged

to go with him. "The reason he left," Yamuna relates, "is because he was having difficulty with his service, and he liked the idea of going on welfare." They arrived in Redding, California in December, 1982, where he began fraudulently collecting welfare amounting to approximately \$600 cash, \$200 in food stamps, and W.I.C.K. food suppliments each month. This welfare was largely illegal because at that time he had a substantial income from his jewelry business.

Soon after arriving, Steve took Yamuna to a hair dresser, and insisted that she cut her hair, dye it black, and wear makeup from that time on.

His association in this locale was with persons who were very much opposed to ISKCON and the new gurus. Also, at that time, he forbade Yamuna from having a picture of Srila Bhaktipada in the house.

Yamuna was forced to put her son in a karmi school, and Steve's warped obsessions became even more ingrained. At one point he told her that he would divorce her if she did not adjust her mentality to his. Although she explicitly stated that she could not tolerate a television in the house, he bought one nevertheless, and forced her to watch it with him in his bedroom.

In Spring of 1983, he began growing a small crop of marijuana in the back of the house. "At first he claimed that he was growing it strictly to sell, but he ended up smoking the whole crop himself," she recalls.

At this point in his life, he became involved with guns. He possessed several pistols and rifles, and he would spend a good deal of time thinking about, cleaning, and shooting his weapons each week. Later on, he became more obsessed with the idea of actually using the guns, and becoming involved in violence. He told Yamuna that his life needed some excitement, and he would talk of becoming an assassin, saying that "there are a lot of people around here who need to get bumped off." He also began to collect and read pornographic literature, on the plea that he wanted to make pendants with photographs of nude women.

On one occasion, Yamuna contracted a severe case of poison ivy, and went to a local doctor, who gave her a prescription that would have cost \$14. But Steve refused to pay the cost, deeming it too expensive. Shortly thereafter, Steve got a very slight case of poison ivy, and immediately ran and bought the same prescription for himself.

For the most part, Steve would sit around the house watching television, while he made Yamuna work, making pendants for his business, and in whatever balance of time she had left, she had to do all the housework, cooking, and caring for the three children.

"I was so miserable that I would plan how to leave without his knowing," she remembers. "But we were in the middle of nowhere, miles from the nearest bus station. I had three kids, and I couldn't drive so what could I do?"

During their stay in California, Steve became convinced that her son, Krsna dasa was the cause of breaking up their marriage. Steve then insisted that Yamuna either give Krsna dasa over to the care of her mother (who lives in England), or that he be put up for adoption. If she refused to do either, then he threatened divorce. Of course, Yamuna refused to do either of these things, so Steve then wrote a letter to Srila Bhaktipada, asking him if he would take Krsna dasa in adoption. Srila Bhaktipada, however, responded that it would not be possible. Finally Steve agreed to send Krsna dasa to the gurukula in New Vrindavana on the condition that Yamuna's mother pay the tuition.

Steve's maltreatment of Yamuna was so atrocious that it sparked a

major dissention with a neighboring devotee, Puranjana. Although they were good friends, Puranjana could not tolerate the way Steve treated her. They would argue and fight over the issue, and the difference became so acute that Puranjana finally left, actually moving out of his house, and shunning Steve's association.

In June, 1983, Steve flew off on another of his wild ideas and decided to build a motor home and travel around the country. He bought an old van and built a wooden frame to increase the size. After covering the frame with aluminum, he lost enthusiasm, and finally hired a carpenter to construct the inside.

In October, 1983, the motor home completed, he packed everything into it and headed east. During the two months that they lived in the motor home, Steve was almost always intoxicated on marijuana.

BACK IN NEW VRINDAVANA

They arrived in New Vrindavana in December, 1983. Although Steve intended only to visit for a short time, Yamuna was fully determined not to leave again. Steve left almost at once on another trip to India, and Yamuna again took up residence in New Vrindavana, doing service at the nursery.

He returned in April, 1984, and began having various disagreements with the management, especially concerning his service. Although he was taking intoxication steadily, he also began writing critical letters to Srila Bhaktipada, presenting his own ideas about how New Vrindavana should be run.

He became especially upset because the New Vrindavana board of directors decided not to place him in charge of the guest house. He had an argument with Srila Bhaktipada in which he became very offensive toward His Divine Grace. Steve claimed that his relationship with Yamuna as husband was eternal, and her relationship with Bhaktipada was temporary. Thus, in late June, he decided to leave again. Steve ordered Yamuna to accompany him, and told her that she would not be allowed even to mention Srila Bhaktipada or New Vrindavana ever again, and that she would not be allowed to visit Krsna dasa, who they were planning to leave in the gurukula. Yamuna refused to accompany him, and although the decision was hers, because Srila Bhaktipada (as well as other devotees) had also advised her not to go with him, Steve began at that time to falsely accuse Srila Bhaktipada of stealing Yamuna from him.

Steve became practically insane with anger because Yamuna would not get into the motor home. He took all of her belongings at that time and tried to kidnap her two small children. Leaving on June 24, 1984, he called her a few days later, and threatened her that if she still refused to go with him, he would do everything in his power to destroy New Vrindavana and Srila Bhaktipada. In the next couple of months he continued to call and write, threatening her and trying to persuade her in various ways. She steadfastly refused. Shortly after this he began a smear campaign to try to defame Srila Bhaktipada. Because he was continually threatening to kidnap the children, she was advised to get legal custody of them by applying for a legal divorce. That divorce was granted in November of 1984, giving her full legal custody of the children.

CONCLUSION

It is our conclusion that Steve's current slanderous campaign against Srila Bhaktipada as well as against ISKCON began with his last threat to Yamuna, and is rooted in his envy of an advanced Vaisnava. His mentality is described in the Srimad Bhagavatam 4:3:21. "One who is conducted by false ego and is thus always distressed, both mentally and sensually, cannot tolerate the opulence of self-realized persons. Being unable to rise to the standard of self-realization, he envies such persons as much as demons envy the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Otherwise, we do not find any sane or rational motive for his actions. This man is insane, and has only personal gratification as his motive. Only the most foolish of fools will listen to him, and the direct result of following any of his insane proposals will be complete chaos.

Therefore, my dear Godbrothers, I fall at your feet and implore you, please unite within the society set up by our divine spiritual master and father His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, and let us not be influenced by these madmen who wish to create dissention among us. They are madmen only, and because of their refusal to follow the programs laid down by Srila Prabhupada, they are agents of Kali, and seek only to impede this wonderful gift and responsibility given us by Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the entire Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya, this divine Sankirtana movement.

"YOUR LOVE FOR ME WILL BE SHOWN BY HOW MUCH YOU COOPERATE
TO KEEP THIS INSTITUTION TOGETHER AFTER I AM GONE"

ALL GLORIES ETERNALLY TO OUR DIVINE FATHER AND GUIDE
HIS DIVINE GRACE A.C.BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

your eternal servants,
Raghunatha dasa
Yamuna dasi