



A VISIT TO JAGANNATH PURI

A PILGRIMAGE JOURNAL

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FOREWORD

"It is still the practice at the Jagannatha temple not to allow those to enter who do not strictly follow the Vedic culture known as Hinduism. Srila Haridasa Thakura, Srila Rupa Gosvami, and Srila Santana Gosvami had previous intimate connections with Mohammedans. . . . Thus they had supposedly been expelled from *brahmana* society. Consequently, out of humility, they did not enter the temple of Jagannatha, although the Personality of Godhead, Jagannatha, in His form of Caitanya Mahaprabhu personally came to see them every day. Similarly, the members of this Krsna consciousness society are sometimes refused entry in some of the temples in India. We should not feel sorry about this as long as we engage in chanting the Hare Krsna *mantra*. Krsna Himself associates with devotees who are chanting His holy name. So there is no need to be unhappy over not being able to enter a certain temple. Such dogmatic prohibitions were not approved by Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Those who were thought unfit to enter Jagannatha temple were daily visited by Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and this indicates that Caitanya Mahaprabhu did not approve of the prohibitions. To avoid unnecessary turmoil, however, these great personalities would not enter Jagannatha temple." (*Sri Caitanya-caritamrita*, *Madhya-lila* 1.63, purport)



PREFACE

An overwhelming majority of people see Lord Kṛṣṇa in a relative way. Even if they acknowledge that Kṛṣṇa is God, they perceive that there are many versions of God from many different cultures. For most earthlings, their cultural upbringing tells them practically nothing of Sri Kṛṣṇa. For a preacher raised in the West, speaking to nondevotees, it's hard to just ignore all this and assume that you are talking to people who accept Kṛṣṇa as the summum bonum.

It is nice, therefore, to get away from the world which considers Kṛṣṇa relative and to go to a holy place where there are many reminders, relics and memories of the Lord's appearance there. This enables you to directly remember Him. The *tīrtha* usually turns you back to the *sastra*, and thus, in a renewed way, you can recognize the importance of the *sastra*.

Maybe not every story that people tell you in the *tīrtha* is accurate; things are confused by time, and sometimes ill-motivated persons create bogus *tīrthas*, claiming, "It was here that Lord Caitanya rested." But you can sort out some of these stories and still get the benefit from the magnetism of the holy place.

To go to a *tīrtha* and share your realizations with other devotees and friends is another kind of preaching. Śrīla Prabhupada writes, "Exchanges of thoughts in regard to Kṛṣṇa give pleasure to the Lord, who therefore favors such devotees with all enlightenment." (*Adi-līla* 1.49, purport)

Jagannath Puri, along with Mayapur and Vrindavan, is of special importance to Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavas, or devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa who follow the disciplic succession of teachings from Lord Caitanya. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada wanted the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) to establish a centre in Jagannath Puri, as he expressed in a 1970

document by which he created the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust: "The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust account will be used to publish my books and literature and to establish temples throughout the world, specifically three temples, one each in Mayapur, Vrindavan, and Jagannath Puri" (*Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*, Vol. 4). We are grateful to his followers who are in the process of carrying out that sacred order.

Satsvarupa das Goswami
Jagannath Puri
February 1987

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In Delhi, while reading from *Caitanya-caritamṛita* of Lord Caitanya's Jagannath Puri *lila*, we grew eager to actually go to Puri. Someone said, "But there is a plane-and-train strike." So, even if we can't go, we read and relish:

It was to Puri He went
when His mother
requested Him to stay nearby.
To Puri came His disciples
for the yearly Ratha-yatra.
And Ramananda Raya came to Puri
to talk with the Lord
on conjugal *rasa* of Radha and Kṛṣṇa.

When Lord Jagannath was absent
from the temple altar,
the Lord left Puri for Alalanath,
but He soon returned
overwhelmed with separation.
And for eighteen years in Puri
He displayed an intensity of *bhava*
in the mood of Radha
which even Lord Kṛṣṇa
never displayed
in His form as Govinda.

Can we go to that Puri?
Just to think of it
eases the blow
of New Delhi.

Flying to Bhubaneswar. I hope that by reading of Lord Caitanya

Mahaprabhu and by viewing the holy places, I can appreciate at least a drop of His devotion.

I talked with a Russian man on the plane. He was very enthusiastic about *yoga*. He listened to a whole tape of Srila Prabhupada singing, took a *paratha* from us and my gift to him of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. Great!

Puri dawn.
 Varuna commends
 the view from the roof:
 "You can see the temple *cakra*
 like Haridas Thakur!"
 The pale white dome
 of Jagannath Puri temple
 with red flag atop
 calls to mind a catalogue
 for Srila Prabhupada's books.

And will Lord Caitanya
 visit us daily?
 If we receive Him
 in the holy names.

Cold morning. Crows on the roof. Chanted *japa* in sight of the white dome of Jagannath Puri temple. The hotel is Indian; rooms like ISKCON in Mayapur. Facing the sea. But the guests show *karmi* scenes—open door: women, children. I thought "Well, this is life." But we will have to see how bad it gets.

OCEAN AT PURI

This is the sea
 where Lord Caitanya swooned.
 This is the sand
 where He ran at high speed
 mistaking the sand dunes
 for Govardhan Hill.

This is the wind
that carried His cries.
And all day and night
the wind is moaning,
the sea-sound is washing.

Five of us, our first afternoon here, went to the beach and sang *kirtan*, sitting on the sand, playing *kartals*. As I read from *Caitanya-caritamrita*, a man came by and tried to sell us coral necklaces. Then another man approached, blowing a conchshell. When he saw us, he called, "Haribol! Hare Krsna!" He recited a *Bhagavatam sloka*: *narayanam namaskritya*, and I thought he was a Gaudiya Vaisnava. But when he got closer, he began making a sales talk, with a pouch of conches. He said he had only one Laksmi conch, with an opening on the left-hand side. Baladeva said we had no money, and the man said, "Just looking. Never mind money!" But when we repeated that we didn't want to buy, he abruptly left. Another coral-necklace salesman had joined us at the same time, and when he saw we wouldn't buy, he got up, spat red pan juice and walked off. No Gaudiya Vaisnavas like I thought. Or maybe I just didn't recognize them.

Our visit is in January;
we thought it would be warm,
but the mornings are cold.

A man selling conches on the beach,
another selling coral;
we don't want such things.
Don't they know
we have come to be near
Lord Gauranga?

NO ENTRANCE

Sitting under a banyan tree (the local residents call it a *kalpa-vrksa*) at the entrance to Gundica temple. We "non-Hindus" cannot enter the temple.

Today I also feel a "cannot enter" mood in terms of pure devotional service. I cannot enter the taste of the holy name, and I

cannot fully enter the mellow of studying Srila Prabhupada's books. I cannot enter the realm of Vaisnava poetry-writing, and I cannot break through my reluctance to preach. (Kept thinking we should do *harinama* in front of Simha-dvara, but we don't.)

Srila Prabhupada writes,
 "Don't be sorry,
 that you cannot enter the temple."
 I am sorry, but
 it's not the fault
 of the Puri pandits—
 I can't chant.

There are quiet gardens here, where Lord Jagannath rests during the Ratha-yatra. An old guard is counting piles of coins. He doesn't mind if I sit by the gate, as long as I don't attempt to go further. Similarly, if I try to enter further into the taste for devotional service, there will be an outcry from my mind and senses. The mind will burst into tears. The senses will send forth their police to club me and push me back, for fear I may disturb the sense gratification.

Sign over Gaudiya Math temple in Puri: "This is not ISKCON temple."

We went to the roof of the library and got a good view of the Jagannath temple. Beside the temple is a big house for kitchens—752 stoves. The self-appointed guide rattles off figures. The offerings are two times a day; fifty-six items. He says that Lord Jagannath smells the offering and then it is distributed as *prasad*. "Do you understand?" he asks. The temple was built in the twelfth century . . . four gates . . . names of different kings. The same guide became angry with us later. Although we gave a big donation to the library-keeper, the guide wanted a separate cut. But we didn't give. Drove off on rickshaws into the crowd. Sad faces, his and mine.

ALWAYS CHANT HARE KRSNA

Reading the *Caitanya-caritamrita* chapter "The Glories of Haridasa Thakur" (*Antya-lila*, Chapter 3). Prabhupada encourages

us to follow Haridasa Thakur but not to imitate him. Haridasa Thakur practiced a very simple *bhajan*. He lived in a cottage in a solitary forest, sat before the *tulasi* plant, and chanted the holy name of the Lord 300,000 times a day. Citing Haridas's example, Prabhupada recommends how Krsna consciousness can be practiced without difficulty. But he warns against imitation:

Throughout the entire day and night, he would chant the sixteen names of the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra*. One should not, however, imitate Haridas Thakur for no one else can chant the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra* 300,000 times a day. Such chanting is for the *mukta-purusa*, or liberated soul. We can follow his example, however, by chanting sixteen rounds of the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra* on beads every day and offering respect to the *tulasi* plant. . . . Therefore we request the members of the Hare Krsna movement to follow Haridasa Thakura's example rigidly.

Haridas Thakur converted a prostitute by his constant chanting. When she surrendered to him, he recommended "Chant the Hare Krsna *mantra* continuously and render service to the *tulasi* plant." In his purport to this verse, Srila Prabhupada also recommends continuous chanting (*Antya-lila* 3.137):

In our Krsna consciousness movement we are teaching our followers to chant the Hare Krsna *mantra* continuously on beads. Even those who are not accustomed to this practice are advised to chant at least sixteen rounds on their beads so that they may be trained. Otherwise, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu recommended:

*tmad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniyah sada harih*

. . . *Sada* means "always." Haridas Thakur says, *nirantara nama lao*: "Chant the Hare Krsna *mantra* without stopping."

"Don't imitate Haridas" and "Always chant" seem like contradictory instructions. How may we please Srila Prabhupada? There are other puports in which Prabhupada makes it very clear that we

should not attempt to go to a solitary place and chant a big number of rounds like Haridas Thakur. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur also has described this as a cheating process, whereby one imitates Haridas Thakur and tries to get fame as a great devotee. If we attempt this, we will fall prey to sleep and lust, and our *bhajan* will become nonsense. Therefore, we take solace that Prabhupada has recommended only a bare minimum of sixteen rounds daily. But when Prabhupada encourages all devotees to chant always, it awakens a flicker of hope within us that maybe one day we may learn to always chant Hare Krsna.

Since we've come here, there is a diminishing half moon, but in the morning, by 6:45, a golden sun. Prabhupada says, "Don't be sorry they bar us from the temple." But we are sorry we don't chant the name of Jagannath in love, because then we would be always blissful: *brahma-bhutaḥ prasannaṭma na socati na kanksati*.

Walking on the beach with Madhu Mangal das. I day-dreamed: What if I became mad about the chanting and couldn't stop chanting Hare Krsna with great pleasure? But Prabhupada wants us to do multifarious duties, including fighting law suits. "Go on with the fighting." Yes. But what about this mechanical *japa*? All right, I will be quiet, try to reform, but not demand progress. The name may one day taste sweet. We walked and chanted two rounds this way. Tomorrow we visit the places of Haridas Thakur.

CHANTING AND PREACHING

From *Adi-lila* 7.92, purport:

"Those who are not advanced prefer to chant the Hare Krsna *mantra* in a solitary place." Such activities constitute in the language of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, a type of cheating process in the sense that they imitate the activities of exalted personalities like Haridasa Thakura. One should not attempt to imitate such exalted devotees. Rather, everyone should endeavor to preach the cult of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in all parts of the world and thus become successful in spiritual life. One who is not very expert in preaching may chant in a secluded place, avoiding bad association, but for one who is actually advanced, preaching and meeting people who are not

engaged in devotional service are not disadvantages. A devotee gives the nondevotees his association but is not affected by their misbehavior. Thus by the activities of a pure devotee even those who are bereft of love of Godhead get a change to become devotees of the Lord one day.

At the *samadhi* of Haridas Thakur. On the central altar is a wooden Deity of Lord Caitanya; on the right altar, Lord Nityananda; and on the left, Advaita Acarya. A chapel structure within the temple is said to be the *samadhi* of Haridas Thakur. Within this *samadhi*, there is a very nice original painting of Haridas Thakur. It shows him bearded wearing only a loincloth, his hands upraised toward the distant *cakra* and dome of the Jagannath Puri temple. Haridas is sometimes called Yavana Haridas. Although he is not of this world, he appears among the low-born. He shows us the way, gesturing to the temple—"See Lord Jagannath from here, in His holy name." Haridas used to chant beside a *tulasi*, and in this temple there is a nice *tulasi* in a pot within the hall.

Another picture shows Lord Gauranga placing his right hand behind the head of Haridas just as Haridas breathes his last in the assembly of Vaisnavas. Lord Caitanya is of a golden hue, dressed in *sannyasi* saffron, and Haridas is of a darker bodily hue, wearing white *kaupin*. In another large picture, Lord Caitanya dances with the body of Haridas Thakur. In another the Vaisnavas gather at the beach, with ocean-breakers visible. As they chant loudly, they prepare to lower Haridas Thakur into the grave. Lord Caitanya cries tears of ecstasy.

If I remember rightly, the Haridas Thakur *samadhi* temple was the place where we held *kirtan* in Prabhupada's presence in January 1977. Today we passed the beach hotel where Prabhupada stayed, but I couldn't distinguish it from other places.*

THE SIDDHA-BAKULA

Here is a tree and the *bhajan kutir* where Haridas Thakur chanted 300,000 names daily. When we arrived, two young boys were lounging on the wall under the *bakula* tree. They got up to welcome us, and we exchanged prostrated *dandavats*. There is a *murti* of Haridas Thakur

*See appendix for a description of Srila Prabhupada in Jagannath Puri.

in the *bhajan kutir*. A sign in English in front of the tree states: "A few words on Sri Sri Siddha Bakul". It reads as follows:

Out of extreme humility poor Sri Haridas Thakur in whom the "trinadapi sunicena" verse was personified was not walking anywhere leaving his bhajan place. Therefore the most kind hearted Lord Caitanya the fulfiller of His devotee's desires used to visit Thakur Haridas here after seeing Lord Jagannath Deity. In order to provide shade to His dearest devotee Namacarya Sri Brahma Haridas Thakur, He planted a used tooth stick of Lord Jagannath. All of a sudden it grew up and appeared as a great shade giving tree. Thakur Sri Haridas used to take three lakhs of harinama everyday under this great divine tree. Under the shade of this sacred tree Sripad Rup Goswami recited "The Lalit Madhab and the Vidagdha Madhab natak" before Lord Sri Gauranga and His followers. During his stay at Sri Dham Nilacal, Sri Santana Goswami was also living here with Sri Haridas Thakur. At last after the miraculous disappearance (nirjana) of Sri Haridas Thakur, Lord Caitanya carried his divine body on His lap and danced under this tree with nama sankirtan. In course of time in order to construct a car of Lord Jagannath the then Gajapati Maharaja ordered his officers to cut off this tree. Siddha Jagannath das the worshiper of this tree as well as a staunch follower of Sri Haridas Thakur protested against it. But all the protests of this poor vairagi became fruitless before the unlimited royal might. Having been dumbfounded the poor vairagi fasted and lied flat under this divine tree. At the next day morning the royal officers found the tree thus hollow and returned without cutting it. From that day ever awakened the sacred memory of the divine "leela" of Lord Caitanya as well as of Sri Haridas Thakur. This holy tree is being worshipped as "SRI SRI SIDDHA BAKUL."

The main branch of the tree is petrified, stone to the touch. This is the part that was transformed so the king wouldn't take it. Other main branches are flourishing with muscular looking trunks and full leaves and even *bakula* fruits. People tie stones to the *kalpa-taru* and make their wishes.

As for chanting Hare Krsna, that has to be directed by the bona fide spiritual master, not merely by coming here and talking with the amiable young boy as he rattles off the story of Gajapati to the group of Indian tourists who stand around the petrified branch.

There are a few broken down one-room brick structures which could be fixed up and used as *bhajan kutirs*. But who is coming here to

do it? Not me—I could not do it if I tried, and besides, we have direct orders not to imitate. We have been given a bare minimum of sixteen rounds, and even that we chant with difficulty. So we honor the *namacarya* and *mukta-purusa* who chanted here with great ecstasy day and night. May he bless the *japa* practices of devotees visiting this place.

I asked the boy in charge how many rounds he chanted. He said he chants twenty-five. His name is Yasoda-nandana and his spiritual master's name is Srinivas Goswami.

Adjoining the Siddha-bakula is Sri Haridas-Sadbhuj *mandir*. Here in a small temple is a jolly Sadbhuj *murti* of Lord Caitanya with a *cadar* and wearing a red turban. Beside Him is Lord Nityananda, and on the other side a shorter Advaita Acarya, both wearing red turbans. A *murti* of Haridas Thakur is in front and to the side of the main altar. Out front there is a garden of flourishing purple *tulasis*. As we approached the Sadbhuj *mandir* another group of friendly boys even younger than the boys at Siddha-bakula were lounging around, sitting and leaning on a small chapel of Nrsimhadeva, which is guarded by Jaya and Vijaya.

At Purushottama Math we saw Deities of Radha and Krsna, with a tall Lord Caitanya waving to us. A *tulasi* plant outdoors. An empty bookcase with a list of Gaudiya Math books taped onto the glass but no books inside. The note said, "If you want books contact Dinadayal Brahmachari." We found him and asked for a copy of *Jaiva Dharma* by Bhaktivinoda Thakur, but he had none.

One gets certain first impressions from visiting a temple, but we should refrain from criticizing since we are outsiders making a first quick visit. For example, in the Gaudiya Math near the Jagannath temple, the first person we encountered was a Gaudiya-tilaked *sadhu* sitting on the steps fingering his *mala* in a beadbag in a very laid-back manner. But I could imagine someone going for the first time to ISKCON Philadelphia (New Nilacala). What might he think, depending on who he first met on the porch or depending on the time of day? Would the visitor be sympathetic to the run-down appearance of an ISKCON building?

GAMBHIRA

In preparation for a morning visit to Lord Caitanya's room, the

Gambhira, I have located references from *Caitanya-caritamrita*.

When Lord Caitanya returned from His tour of South India to Jagannath Puri, He was given residence at Kasi Misra's house. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya had been talking about Lord Caitanya's arrival with King Prataparudra. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya said, "His Holiness Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu will return very soon, I wish to have a nice place ready for Him, a place solitary and peaceful. Lord Caitanya's residence should be very secluded and also near the temple of Lord Jagannatha. Please consider this proposal and give me a nice place for Him."

King Prataparudra replied, "Kasi Misra's house is exactly what you require. It is near the temple and it is very secluded, calm, and quiet."

When Lord Caitanya arrived, He was very pleased to stay at the house of Kasi Misra.

The Gambhira within Kasi Misra's house became the scene of many of Lord Caitanya's pastimes, especially in His last twelve years when he felt intense separation from Krsna. It was in this room that Lord Caitanya would stay up all night, sometimes reciting verses and sharing songs with His intimate disciples Ramananda Raya and Swarupa Damodara. Krsnadas Kaviraj warns us that the emotions of transcendental madness and separation from Krsna are very deep and mysterious: "Even though one is very advanced and learned, he cannot understand or describe unfathomable subject matters. It is possible only if Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu gives him the capability."

One day while viewing Lord Jagannath in the temple, Lord Caitanya suddenly saw Him as the son of Maharaja Nanda, Krsna, in person. But Lord Caitanya was interrupted from this vision by a woman who stepped on His shoulder in order to get a better view of the Deity. Lord Caitanya then returned to His room and passed the evening, as Ramananda Raya and Swarupa Damodara recited verses to Him from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and the Vaisnava poets Vidyapati, Candi das, and Jayadev Goswami. While these intimate devotees layed in front of the door to Lord Caitanya's room, He remained awake through the entire night, chanting Hare Krsna very loudly. But after some time, when they could not hear Him chanting, they entered the room. They found the three doors of the room locked, but Lord Caitanya had gone. After an anxious search they found Him lying in the corner of the northern side of the Simha-dvara gate, in a state of extreme bodily transformation.

Another time, while His servant Govinda lay at the door of His

room and Lord Caitanya loudly chanted the Hare Krsna *mantra*, the Lord again got out of the locked room and left the house. This time He went to a cowshed on the southern side of the Simha-dvara and fell unconscious among the cows from the district of Tailanga.

As Lord Caitanya's transcendental madness intensified, He **began to stay up all night, rubbing His face against the walls of the Gambhira.** Without knowing it, He sustained many injuries on His mouth and cheeks, and blood oozed from them. This caused great anxiety to Swarupa Damodara, who then entreated Lord Caitanya to **allow Sankara Pandit to lie down in the same room with Him:**

Thus Sankara Pandita lay at the feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the Lord placed His legs upon Sankara's body. Sankara became celebrated by the name "the pillow of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu." . . . Sankara massaged the legs of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, but while massaging he would fall asleep and thus lie down. He would lie asleep without a covering on his body, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu would get up and wrap him with His own quilt.

Sankara would always fall asleep, but he would quickly awaken, sit up and begin massaging the legs of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. In this way he would stay awake the entire night. Out of fear of Sankara, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu could neither leave His room nor rub His lotuslike face against the walls. (*Antya-lila* 19.68-74)

Krsnadas Kaviraj says that when people hear about the Lord's uncommon transformations of body, they become very astonished. He states that no one has elsewhere ever witnessed such bodily changes nor has anyone read about them in the revealed scriptures. "Yet Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the supreme *sannyasi*, exhibited these ecstatic symptoms. . . . Ragunatha das Goswami lived continuously with Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and I am simply recording whatever I have heard from him. Although common men do not believe in these pastimes, I believe in them totally."

At the Gambhira: Upon entering, on the left is a small temple with Deities of Radha-Krsna and Lalita-Vishaka. On the far right is Lord Gauranga; on the far left, Nityananda; and in front of the Deity room, a *murti* of Gour Gopal, who was supposedly put in charge of this temple by Lord Caitanya. The *pujari* says that Lord Caitanya saw these Deities of Radha-Krsna while He was living in Puri.

Coming out of the first temple, we walk straight ahead toward a

sign that says "Way to Gambhira".

The *pujari* walks ahead of us, looking back several times to make sure we're following him. In an area enclosed with pillars, two *babajis* are holding *kirtan*: "Sri Krsna Caitanya, Prabhu Nityananda, Hare Krsna, Hare Rama, Sri Radha-Govinda" (*kirtan* goes on twenty-four hours a day at the Gambhira). From within this enclosure you can look through a small barred window into Sri Gambhira. Even nowadays it's very impressive. It is a small room, and I thought, "This is how a *sannyasi* should live."

On a marble throne a *murti* of Lord Caitanya is encircled by a cloth, so that just His face is visible. There is an iron grill box said to contain Lord Caitanya shoes and quilt. There is also an electric fan inside, where *pujaris* do *puja* at scheduled times. Just above the Gambhira, on the wall, is a multicolored terracotta bas-relief of "Sri Sri Man Gouranga." His right hand held up in benediction, His lotus feet marked from years of worship. To His right, a bas-relief of Sri Swarupa Damodara, and below him, Lord Caitanya's servant, Sri Govinda, holding a water pot. On the left side of Sri Caitanya is a bas-relief of Ramananda Raya with shaven head.

I looked into Sri Gambhira for a few minutes, until a man asked me to move aside. Some ladies with children were behind us. Then a conversation began between one of the resident *sadhus* and some of the *kirtan* members. The combined actions made the place crowded and noisy. But still it is the Gambhira. I sat down in a corner and tried to understand a fraction of it.

TOTA GOPINATHA MANDIR

This temple is located in a village named after Lord Caitanya. Gour Batsahi. It is in the midst of a grove of *polang* trees, which produce an oil used in the lamps. Within the courtyard there is a small structure which has miniature marble impressions of feet. While we were there, a young man threw a bucket of water over the feet. Narada Rsi das said that these are Lord Caitanya's lotus feet. "They may be Krsna's," I said. So we asked the young man, who said, "Since my childhood I have been knowing them as Radharani's feet."

We arrived while the Deities were curtained off, during the offering of *bhoga*. After a few minutes, however, we were able to take *darshan*. On the far left is Lord Balarama and His two wives Revati and Varuni. Lord Balarama is in the pose of *tribanga*, like Krsna, with bright

red soles, bright white body, and a curvy flute or horn in His hands.

The middle Deity is black Tota Gopinatha, with a black Radha and a black Lalita. He is somewhat familiar to me, with His very beautiful and unusual body joints, as I have seen in the photo in *Caitanya-caritamrita*. On the far right altar are other Deities of Radha-Madanamohan and Gaura-Gadadhar.

According to the priests, the temple is called Tota Gopinatha because within this garden, or *tota*, Gopinatha appeared. The temple has a connection to Gadadhar Pandit. They say that the *sila* of Krsna worshiped in this temple spoke one night to Gadadhar Pandit and told him that a Deity of Gopinatha was buried in a nearby hill. Another priest told a different version. He said it was Lord Caitanya who told Gadadhar Pandit to excavate and worship the Deities of Gopinatha, Radha, and Lalita. The hill is now a big sand elevation near the temple. They also say Lord Caitanya used to visit here to hear *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Prabhupada has informed us that according to reliable sources, Lord Caitanya completed His worldly pastimes by merging into the body of Tota Gopinatha *arca-vigraha*. The priests here also mentioned it.

BHAJAN AND PREACHING

I have been reading the section "The Cleansing of the Gundica Temple" as a meditation before tomorrow's visit to the Gundica temple's south gate. I continue to find quotes that advocate constant chanting, and yet these quotes are always balanced by statements which stress that preaching is the essence. Earlier today I found a statement that the sole occupation of a *sannyasi* should be the chanting of Hare Krsna. Now, in reading of the cleansing of the Gundica temple, there are two references which describe solitary *bhajan* as comparable to dirty things accumulated within the heart. When the word *kuti-nati*, meaning duplicity, is mentioned, Prabhupada writes, "One may attempt to imitate Srila Haridasa Thakura by living in a solitary place . . . but such a person's real desire is for name and fame. In other words, one thinks that fools will accept one to be as good as Haridasa Thakura just because one lives in a solitary place. These are all material desires." Another dirt mentioned is *jiva-himsa*, or envy of other living entities. Usually we think of *ahimsa* in terms of refraining from killing or harming other living entities. Prabhupada

defines it as follows:

The word *jiva-himsa* actually means stopping the preaching of Krsna consciousness. Preaching work is described as *para-upkara*, welfare activities for others. Those who are ignorant of the benefits of devotional service must be educated by preaching. If one stops preaching and simply sits down in a solitary place, he is engaging in material activity (*Madhya-lila* 12.134)

PRABHUPADA ON THE PRIESTS OF JAGANNATH PURI

Varuna das, who was born and raised in India, went today into Jagannath temple to procure *maha-prasad*. But when he was going to the kitchen, some pandits stopped him, noticing his American-style sweatshirt. When they began interrogating him, he failed to answer some of their intricate questions about his material origin and *gotra*. They then concluded he was not a bona fide person and began to push him around. One of them suggested that they give him a good beating. After causing Varuna considerable anxiety, they pushed him out of the temple.

Srila Prabhupada was unhappy about this policy of the pandits, and he commented on it in a lecture he gave in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, in 1977:

We are giving Krsna to all these Americans because they are now qualified. Sometimes we are criticized in India that "Bhaktivedanta Swami is spoiling Hindu religion." But it is not actually the fact. We are increasing the numbers of Hindus. Unfortunately, it is a fact that for these so-called priests of Puri—they do not allow. Everyone knows that Jagannath is made of wood, or in other temples He is made of stone, but do people come to see wood or stone? Only the atheist class thinks that this man is going to see a piece of wood. This is called *naraka*, hellish intelligence; *arce visnau siladhir gurusu naramatir vaisnave jati-buddhir*: if someone thinks that this man is an ordinary person, or if he thinks the *caranamrita* or *ganga-jal* is ordinary water, then he is *naraki*. These Europeans and Americans are properly initiated according to the Vaisnava system, according to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's indication. If somebody thinks the American is *jati*, American *jati*, then what can be done?

After this lecture, a man asked Prabhupada, "Why does God

want to keep the devotees out of the temple?" Prabhupada replied:

God wants that these rascals may remain in darkness. They cannot understand a Vaisnava, so let them remain in darkness. That God wants. Your question is why God wants. God wants that so-called *brahmanas* who eat Jagannath *prasad* and fish remain in darkness—unable to understand who is a Vaisnava. God keeps them in darkness.

VISIT TO JAGANNATH VALLABHA TEMPLE

The tourist book, *Visit Puri*, encourages us to visit Jagannath Vallabha temple, because "Above all, this Math is connected with the sweet memory of Sri Caitanya's celebrated contemporary Raya Ramananda Patanyaiyaka." But now we find that Jagannath Vallabha is another place where we are not allowed to enter. It is ironic, because Ramananda Raya was himself considered a *sudra* and yet Lord Caitanya embraced him and honored him for being better than millions of brahmins. Ramananda Raya had intimate realization about Radha and Kṛṣṇa, and thus Lord Caitanya allowed Ramananda to instruct Him.

At one point in their discussions Ramananda Raya became hesitant and embarrassed, considering himself low-born and unqualified to speak to a great *sannyasi*. But Lord Caitanya encouraged him: "Whether one is a *brahmana*, a *sannyasi*, or a *sudra*—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa." (*Madhya-lila* 8.128)

Sometimes Hindus concede that a low-born person may become a Vaisnava, but they claim he should still be barred from various places and positions until he takes a future birth in an upper-caste family in India. There appears to be partial support of this in the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, but Prabhupada explains it in a purport:

It is stated in the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* that one should not accept initiation from a person who is not in the brahminical order if there is a fit person in the brahminical order present. This instruction is meant for those who are overly dependent on the mundane social order and is suitable for those who want to remain in mundane life. If one understands the truth of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and seriously desires to attain transcendental knowledge for the perfection of life, he can accept a spiritual master from any social status, provided the spiritual master is

fully conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Thākura also states that although one is situated as a *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaiśya*, *sudra*, *brahmacari*, *vanaprastha*, *grhastha* or *sannyasi*, if he is conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa, he can become a spiritual master as *varṇa-pradarsaka guru*, *dikṣa-guru* or *sikṣa-guru*. . . . Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world. This does not mean that people should take to His teachings and remain *sudras* or *candalas*. As soon as one is trained as a pure Vaiṣṇava, he must be accepted as a bona fide *brahmana*. (*Madhya-līlā* 8.128, purport)

We have come to the lake near the Jagannath Vallabha temple
Tall coconut trees, reflected in the water, turn the water green.

A skinny man with a stick
prevents us from entering
the temple of Ramananda Raya.
And since I am a wise-guy American,
he makes me proud
of my own nationality.
Prabhupada warns: Don't think
because you are American Goswami
that you are better.
And neither should the Indian think
he is better than you.

At the lakeside, a dog fight!
Five mongrels growl, claw and bite
and a sixth dog
runs barking from a distance
to join the biting melee.
Why compete?
Are we are any better?

Varuṇa was allowed to enter the Jagannath Vallabha temple. He said there are three altars in the Deity room. One holds very large *murtis* of Lord Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra. The same altar holds two other sets of Jagannath Deities and many sets of Rādhā-

Krsna Deities. On the middle altar there is a Deity of Lord Caitanya (in saffron) and, beside Him, Ramananda Raya (in white). There are also two Deities of four-armed Narayana on this same altar. On the third altar is a Deity of Krsna surrounded by a cloth garland so that only His face is visible. The Deity of Radharani is covered in a similar way.

The priests in the temple said that Ramananda Raya worshiped the Deity of Krsna installed here. And Lord Caitanya used to meet here with Ramananda Raya. They say that in the gardens where we are sitting, Ramananda Raya used to train the dancing girls for the pleasure of Lord Jagannath.

This is, therefore, a worshipable place, where Ramananda Raya performed feats impossible for any *grhasta*, *brahmacari* or *sannyasi*. We pray for Ramananda's mercy, so that we can at least maintain our strict vows of celibacy in body, mind and words, and so that we may be able to relish the transcendental *lila* of Krsna.

While leaving the temple grounds, I noticed the sign "Foreign Nationals Restricted". I thought, "Restricted? Why not *forbidden*?" I asked Varuna to ask the guard whether there was some condition under which we might enter. Since we are *sadhus*, perhaps they could restrict us to a certain time of day or length of stay. But, when Varuna approached the guard, the guard angrily denounced him, saying (in Hindi), "You are with those people? Then you are not an Indian! They eat meat and fish!"

True, in this body we *have* eaten meat and fish, and thus it is an abominable body. But chanting the holy name and taking shelter of the pure devotee has changed all that. But the materialists cannot understand it.

AT THE SOUTHERN GATE OF GUNDICA

It is locked. We cannot get even a step inside. So we sit on a stone slab and read "The Cleansing of the Gundica Temple"—paying special attention to Prabhupada's purport describing how to clean the heart for receiving Krsna. Although it is impossible for us to clean the entire material world, at least we can clean our own heart and mind by practices of Krsna consciousness.

After hearing this potent story and analogy of the cleansing of the Gundica temple, we felt that we had actually gained access to Gundica. To come here physically is an inspiration, but it is not

absolutely required. The main thing is to hear about Gundica from Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and the Bhaktivedanta purport in *Caitanya-caritamrita*. Otherwise, simply to be allowed entrance past a gate or into a temple does not deliver us from agitations of body and mind.

Today we are planning to chant in public, in front of Jagannath Puri temple. We tried to procure a *mrdanga* in Puri but could not find one. Now we have purchased one in Alalanath for 170 rupees. Thinking of *harinama* in Jagannath Puri, I found this reference in *Caitanya-caritamrita*:

Because the temple of Lord Jagannatha is situated at Jagannatha Puri, many devotees from all parts of the world came to perform *sankirtana* in glorification of the Lord. All these devotees were certainly seen and heard by Maharaja Prataparudra, but here he admits that the *kirtana* performed by the associates of the Lord was unique. He had never before heard such *sankirtana* nor seen such attractive features manifest by the devotees. The members of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness should go to India during the birthday ceremony of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu at Mayapur and perform *sankirtana* congregationally. This will attract the attention of all the important personalities in India, just as the beauty, bodily luster and *sankirtana* performance by the associates of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu attracted the attention of Maharaja Prataparudra. The associates of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu were unlimited during the Lord's presence on this planet, but anyone who is pure in life and devoted to the mission of Sri Caitanya is to be understood as a *nitya-siddha* associate of the Lord. (*Madhya-lila* 11.96)

“I CANNOT GO NEAR THE TEMPLE”—
THIS IS VAISNAVA HUMILITY.

One year, when the devotees from Bengal arrived to see Lord Caitanya in Jagannath Puri, He individually embraced each devotee and spoke sweet words to them. When He did not see Haridas Thakur, the Lord asked “Where is Haridas?” Then Lord Caitanya saw that in the distance Haridas was lying flat on the road, offering obeisances. All the devotees went to Haridas, saying, “The Lord

wants to meet you. Please come immediately." But Haridas replied, "I cannot go near the temple because I am a low-caste abominable person. I have no authority to go there." Prabhupada's purport to this verse:

Although Haridasa Thakura was such a highly exalted Vaisnava that he was addressed as Haridasa Gosvami, he still did not like to disturb the common sense of the general populous. Haridasa Thakura was so exalted that he was addressed as Thakura and Gosani, and these titles are offered to the most advanced Vaisnavas. The spiritual master is generally called Gosani, and Thakura is used to address the *paramahamsas*, those in the topmost rank of spirituality. Nonetheless, Haridasa Thakura did not want to go near the temple, although he was called there by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself. The Jagannatha temple still accepts those Hindus who are in the *varnasrama* order. Other castes, especially those who are not Hindu, are not allowed to enter the temple. This is a long-standing regulation and thus Haridasa Thakura, although certainly competent and qualified to enter the temple, did not want even to go near it. This is called Vaisnava humility. (*Madhya-lila* 11.165, purport)

IMPRESSIONS FROM HARINAMA AT THE SIMHA-DVARA

When we first arrived in town, beggars and salesmen approached us, and we were the usual passive Westerners. But I knew that today would be different because within a few moments we would have the dominant energy—the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. As soon as we began *kīrtan* (five men, one *mṛdāṅga*, one gong, two pairs of *kārtals*), a respectful crowd gathered. And for the most part that was the main impression—a pious, curious audience. Of course, most people went about their usual business and paid slight attention to our presence. This happens to be true whether you are in New York or London or Jagannath Puri. Yet we held a steady crowd of about thirty to forty. It was inspiring to chant out loud directly before the Simha-dvara gate. From where we were chanting we could see into the entrance where the Jagannath Deity known as Patita-pavana gives His merciful *darshan*. We could also see the two gate lions, and Jaya and Vijaya, and many other temple figures. And, looking in the other direction down the road, we saw the red sandstone domes of the Gaudiya Math temple.

We had stationed ourselves somewhat close to an intersection.

Two policemen wearing white suits and white helmets with a red stripe came near our party to direct the extra traffic due to our *kirtan*. They did not approach us with a complaint, but we sensed the inconvenience we were causing and moved out of the way.

Even in an off-season the area in front of Jagannath temple is very noisy, and so we had to raise our voices loudly. There were the usual very small children standing in the front rows of our audience, their school books covered with newspaper, holding on to battered tin lunch pails. Most of the people appeared very simple, and I guessed they were Puri residents, quietly listening to the foreigners' performance of *harinama*.

Occasionally someone who looked like a local brahmin or member of the priestly intelligentsia, with a slight stubble of beard and refined intelligent features, came to look us over and then walked away. A couple of gentlemen, after watching us, made some demonstrative remarks to the nearby crowd, appearing to mock us. I thought to myself that anything they may be saying about our foolishness is correct, and that's all right. We should not think that we are great because we are chanting the holy name. The wonderful thing is the holy name itself. By chanting the holy name we expose the fact that all these people are not chanting. Why don't they chant with us? Or why aren't they chanting on their own? The loud chanting of the holy name is praised in all the scriptures as the panacea for this age. It is glorious when some persons, no matter who they may be, gather to vibrate the holy name. Let them make fun of us because of our appearance. At the same time, we chanters should be as respectable as possible in our behavior, so that the chanting will be most effective.

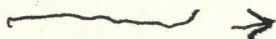
A challenge occurred when one man, dressed like a clerk, approached and began pointing toward the *mrdanga* with an angry look. At first I didn't know what he was saying, but then he began making the same gestures toward Madhu Mangala's sandals. I guess he was accusing us of bringing leather into Puri on the pretext of chanting the holy name. Since this could have become a big disturbance, I fervently hoped that Madhu's sandals were *not* leather. The accusing man stated his case out loud so that others would get involved. He was obviously an agitator, the same breed that appears in streets all over the world whenever there is *harinama*. He walked over to Madhu and bent down to examine his feet. I noticed that this man himself had a pair of sandals that looked leatherlike, although most people were barefoot or wore rubber flip-flops. I then noticed that quite a few people were looking at our shoes and dress. It's a fact—that as modest

as we may think we appear in our *sadhu* attire, we appear outlandish to the people in Puri just by a few Western additions—an inexpensive wrist-watch, a sweater with holes in it, an ordinary sweatshirt or pair of socks. Standing in public on *harinama* is like going naked, not in the physical sense, but spiritually and mentally.

After each of us led *kirtan* for about twenty minutes, Narada Rsi asked if he could speak to the crowd for a couple of minutes. He is the only one in our group who speaks Oriya, so it was our good fortune. I caught a few words from his opening remarks about Prabhupada, Scottish Churches' College, Prabhupada's youth, and Bhakti-siddhanta Sarasvati. I guess he was describing the mission of the Hare Krsna movement. But then he began to launch into a criticism of the Puri pandits for not allowing the devotees into the temple. That I could clearly ascertain by his gestures toward the temple and the words to the effect that we were not allowed in. He then made the remark that if this is their policy, then Jagannath is not really Lord of the Universe but Lord of Orissa. By this time I was quite disappointed that Narada was making such an inflammatory speech. In the morning I had mentioned to the devotees the example of Haridas Thakur's humility. He did not feel himself worthy to even go near the temple. And yet here we were a few feet from the temple, outwardly denouncing the pandits' policies. Sure enough, Narada's inflammatory words touched off an angered response from a temple brahmin who just happened to come by at that moment. He was gray-haired, with a *sikha* and priestly robes. He shot back a challenge to Narada that Jagannath was indeed Lord of Universe, not just the Lord of Orissa.

Lessons learned: If possible go barefoot on *harinama*, or at least wear only flip-flops. And no inflammatory speeches.

One could say that our *harinama* performance was just a token, a symbolic act. But any sincere service has great value. So why minimize it? We admit that we are not bold chanters and that we don't chant for many hours and days, but at least we performed *harinama* as a regulative duty. As stated in *Caitanya-caritamrita*, "Anyone who worships Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu by congregational chanting should be understood to be very intelligent. One who does not do so must be considered a victim of this age and bereft of all intelligence." (*Madhya-lila* 11.99)



PREPARING FOR TOMORROW'S PARIKRAMA

Wherever we go,
chant the holy name—
at Jagannath temple
describe each gate,
pray at each gate,
show the pandits
you think it's all right
that you don't enter,
you just chant.

APPRECIATION OF LORD CAITANYA

I realize that out of all the *acaryas*, Lord Caitanya is the foremost. I have learned this from books like *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* and *Caitanya-caritamrita*, and this is the conclusion of the Gaudiya-*sampradaya* stalwarts, the six *goswamis*. Visvanatha Cakravarti, Baladeva, and so on. Narottama das Thakur says, "Whoever calls the name of Gauranga, I want to associate with him." From Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Bhaktisiddhanta Thakur—because Prabhupada has blessed us to hear from them—we understand that Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's contribution is astounding and most magnanimous.

We also see this when we chant in public and when we read the *sampradaya* books. Whenever we look at another teacher's composition, we notice either some tinge of *karma-kanda* or a hint of emancipation, some whiff of impersonalism or the lack of full Radha-Krsna knowledge given by Lord Caitanya. In the discourses of Lord Caitanya's devotees and in their ecstatic *kirtan* is the ultimate conclusion. We honor Christ, Buddha, Sankara, Mohammed. And certainly we revere and adore Ramanuja and Madhva. But as for Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is Krsna Himself, we exclusively love and recognize Him as the all-attractive source of everything: *sri krsna caitanya radha-krsna nahe anya*.

SARVABHAUMA BHATTACARYA'S HOUSE: THREE SCENES FROM CAITANYA-CARITAMRITA

1.

When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu entered the temple of Jagannath, He immediately fainted. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya then took Him to his home. Nityananda Prabhu and other devotees then arrived at the Jagannath temple, and they also came to the house of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Krsnadas Kaviraj states, "Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya permitted all the devotees to enter his house, and upon seeing Nityananda Prabhu, the Bhattacharya offered his obeisances." Finding Lord Caitanya in a state of *samadhi*, they revived Him to external consciousness by their loud chanting. After the reunion of all the devotees, they honored *maha-prasad* from Jagannath temple at Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house.

2.

Krsnadas Kaviraj describes, "The next morning, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya together visited the temple of Lord Jagannath. When they entered the temple, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya offered Caitanya Mahaprabhu a seat, while he himself sat down on the floor out of due respect for a *sannyasi*." Then immediately the discussion began on *Vedanta* philosophy. After Lord Caitanya defeated the impersonal arguments of Sarvabhauma and transformed him into a Vaisnava, another important scene took place at Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house.

Early the next morning Lord Caitanya went to the temple of Jagannath, saw the Lord rise from His bed, and accepted garlands and *prasad* of the Deity. He then wrapped those remnants in a cloth and brought them to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house. When He arrived, just before dawn, Sarvabhauma was just rising from bed. Lord Caitanya heard Sarvabhauma chant, "Krsna, Krsna!" and He was pleased to hear how Sarvabhauma had become a spontaneous devotee. Lord Caitanya then entered the house and gave *maha-prasad* to Sarvabhauma, who immediately accepted it even though he had not performed his morning bathing.

Bhattacharya quoted verses from the *Padma Purana* to prove that *maha-prasad* should be taken at once, regardless of time and place. Lord Caitanya was very pleased to see Sarvabhauma take the *maha-prasad*, and they chanted Hare Krsna and danced in ecstasy.

3.

Madhya-lila, Chapter 15, tells of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's offering *prasad* to the Lord and here again the setting is the Bhattacharya's house. Details of the construction of the house are given:

On the southern side of the kitchen were two rooms for offering food, and in one of them the food was offered to Salagrama Narayana. The other room was for Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's lunch. The Lord's lunch-room was very secluded, and it was newly constructed by Bhattacharya. The room was so constructed that there was only one door as an entrance from the outside for Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. There was another door attached to the kitchen, and it was through this door that the food was brought. (*Madhya-lila* 15. 204-205)

Krsnadas Kaviraj gives elaborate, detailed, and enticing descriptions of the many sumptuous preparations that had been cooked by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's wife and offered to the Lord that day. On this occasion there took place the incident wherein Amogha entered through the outside door and made an offensive remark about Lord Caitanya's eating. Lord Caitanya laughed at the remark and went on honoring the wonderful *prasad* that had been offered to Him with love by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya and his wife.

VISIT TO SARVABHAUMA BHATTACARYA'S HOUSE

The house is approximately one-half kilometer south of the Simha-dvara gate. Turning right to Sweta-ganga tank, Sarvabhauma's house is on the left.

It seems to be a somewhat hidden place, not indicated in any of the tourist books and neither is it a busy *asram*. It is more like a household. The residents seemed friendly and showed us into a small open hall with an enclosed structure at one end. The man indicated a corner and said that this was the spot where Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya discoursed on the *Vedanta* for seven days and Lord Caitanya defeated him with the Vaisnava *siddhanta*.

The area is about twelve feet by twenty-four feet, with a black floor. The plaster walls have been painted with many different devotional scenes. One wall in the corner shows Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, quite a stout figure, with *sikha* and short beard. He is

sitting with his left hand on his hip, his right hand gesturing with fingers downward, as he debates. Worshipers fan him with *camaras*. On the wall facing Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya at an angle is a three-quarter bas-relief of the Sadbhuj of Lord Caitanya. Below Lord Caitanya are a table and black wooden sandals. The caretaker said these sandals belonged to Sarvabhauma. Other frescos in the room are fading, such as the ones of two bulls (or cows) butting heads; a four-armed form of Nrsimhadeva; a large painting of Jagannath Deities; a baby Krsna; and near the ceiling, a series of about twenty-five separate scenes of *krsna-lila*, soon to fade away unless they are repainted.

One would like to question the residents more about some of the intricate points, such as whether this was actually the spot where the *Vedanta* was spoken, or was it spoken in Jagannath temple, as it appears to say in *Caitanya-caritamṛta*. One would like to ask: Where did Sarvabhauma bring Lord Caitanya when he found Him unconscious in the temple? Where is the place where Lord Caitanya gave the Jagannath *prasada* to Sarvabhauma early in the morning? Where are the rooms, as they are described in such a detailed way, where Caitanya Mahāprabhu feasted, on the invitation of Sarvabhauma and his wife? And since they have consecrated this spot as the site of the seven-day discussion on the *Vedanta*, one wants to meditate on that philosophical exchange and the triumph of Lord Caitanya. But the family who lives here does not speak our language, and while we try to meditate, they are speaking of other things. (According to Narada Rsi, their talk was not so friendly. It was the same Pūrī line, that the Westerners are not allowed in the temple because they are low-class, don't follow *sanātana-dharma*, are *mlecchas*, and so on. There seems to be very little acquaintance with the actual practices of ISKCON devotees or even a theoretical comprehension of the knowledge that even a dog-eater can become transformed into a Vaisnava by the chanting of the holy name.)

I promised myself that I will reread Srila Prabhupada's purports and the verses in *Madhya-lila*, Chapter Six. Certainly this spot is special because it is Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house and has the paintings of Sadbhuj and Saravabhauma and because the residents have the sense to commemorate the occasion of the *Vedanta* explanation by Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Other items in the hall: a separate bas-relief of Krsna lifting Govardhan Hill; in a niche, half-covered with cloth, a painting of Sarvabhauma, with his hand in a teaching *mudra*, and his

followers—two ladies and ten men with *tilak*, *sikhas*, and folded palms—all standing and facing Sarvabhauma in a worshipful pose. There is also a painting of Maharaja Prataparudra standing with folded palms, facing Lord Caitanya, and another of Sarvabhauma, who appears to be worshipping Lord Caitanya.

A young boy of the house took an interest in us and showed us something special: a hidden tunnel which they claim leads in two directions—to the sea and to the Jagannath temple. Supposedly it was used by Lord Caitanya.

Opposite this hall there is a Deity room where there are Radha-Krsna Deities, Radha-Rasikaraja and four other sets that they say were worshiped by Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya. Their worship continues today, and we saw Them with Their winter coverings.

GATE VISITING

From Sarvabhauma's house, we visited the Sweta-ghat, where we saw a pretty, white-spotted deer, the pet of some *sadhus*. There were also bathers and Deity worship. We sat the shore of the *ghat* and discussed Sarvabhauma's pastimes with Lord Caitanya and concluded that it would take a great devotee-scholar to unearth all the sites which seem to have been lost or demolished over the last five hundred years.

From the ghat, we went to see the gates of Jagannath temple, starting with the horse gate, which is the south gate. The horses are recent additions contributed by one donor. The man at the gate said the horseriders are Krsna and Balarama, appearing as Kalki to kill the demons. One of the riders is bluish, and His horse rears up, crushing underneath its front feet a muscular demon. At the other side of the gate is a whitish figure also attacking a demon. Nearby this gate is an orange Hanuman who is being worshiped in a roadside temple. The deity is about ten feet tall, and the priests sell small ghee lamps to offer to Hanuman. All these awesome Deities are for the protection of the temple.

The tiger gate is the west gate. The tigers are not as nicely tended to or painted as the horses, but they seem to be original forms hundreds of years old. Near this gate is a temple of Sita-Rama where there is a continuous *kirtan*. The Deity is three-quarter bas-relief and on top of it is a relief series showing the ten incarnations. In the place where Krsna and Balarama appear (between Buddha and Kalki),

Balarama is in His usual whitish form, but the form of Krsna is Lord Jagannath, manifesting two feet, standing on a lotus. The north gate is the elephant gate, but it is not directly accessible. There is an outer gate before you can reach the elephant gate, and so you can only look through it and see in the distance two blue elephants. We did not visit the Simha-dvara gate, the main gate that faces east, since we'd already seen it.

Wherever we go we hear many different and sometimes contradictory versions of the origin and history of the different Deities, gates and *lilas*. It is best to stick to *Caitanya-caritamrta* and look for whatever one can to corroborate those authoritative descriptions. Whatever else we hear from the priests is interesting, and we don't offer any counter-arguments, but after visiting many places it becomes bewildering.

Also bewildering are the density of population, the human suffering of those with physical maladies, the loud music from a wedding *pandal*, and the man wearing a brahmin thread across his bare chest and walking down the street with a fat fish in his right hand. And it's also bewildering to consider cultural relativities—in the West our shaven heads and *sikhas* are the oddity, while here our dress and *sikhas* are normal, but the light color of our skin is very odd.

PURI MISCELLANY

A new, unusually large red flag appeared today over the Jagannath temple. They say it is a donation by a pious businessman. The flag has two streamers which look about a hundred feet long.

As we find our way around Puri, shopping and touring, we begin to notice numerous little temples of Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra. And many stores are named after Jagannath; a Hotel Subhadra, a bus named Baladeva. So the Lord's *darshan* is available if one is looking for it. The police jeeps have the eyes and *tilak* of Lord Jagannath painted on the center of their windshields. Over doorways of houses are painted the words Wel-Come and the figure of Jagannath.

NARENDRA SAROVARA

There are numerous references to Narendra lake in the *Caitanya-*

caritamṛta. Lord Caitanya's devotees from Bengal stopped there to bathe, and even today Bengalis making a pilgrimage to Puri follow the same habit. One of the most jubilant of Lord Caitanya's pastimes at Narendra Sarovara occurred when Lord Jagannath went for His boat ride. Since Lord Jagannath is very heavy, the *viṣṇu-vigraha* of Jagannath temple, known as Govinda, boarded a boat and floated in the waters of Narendra Sarovara. It just happened that when Lord Caitanya arrived with His personal associates to see these pastimes, all the devotees from Bengal also arrived at the lake, and they had a great meeting with the Lord.

The Gaudiya-sampradaya, consisting of all the devotees of Bengal, began congregational chanting. When they met the Lord, they began to cry loudly in ecstatic love. Because of the pastimes in the water, there was a great jubilation on the shore, with music, singing, chanting, dancing, and tumultuous crying. (*Antya-līla*, 10. 46-47)

Narendra Sarovara is a large tank, the shores lined with coconut, mango and banyan trees, as well as a few temples and *samādhi mandirs*. In the morning many persons bathe, or beat their laundry, on the steps of various *ghats* leading into the lake. The boat ceremony of Govinda is still observed here annually and is known as Candan-yatra or Chapla-khela.

We saw pigeons and crows flying across the lake and some landing on a decorative dome in the center. We sat on a secluded stone and held *kīrtan*. It was quite different from the in-town *kīrtan*, since the people mainly left us to ourselves as we worshiped the holy name.

A cement walkway leads about a hundred feet into the lake, where a temple of Lord Jagannath is located. Within the room are Deities of Lord Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra. As we entered, an old *pujari* exclaimed, "All foreigners welcome!" and waved us forward. Right on the altar, at the feet of the Deities, there was an open guest book. The *pujari* took me by the hand, asked my name, and then recited a prayer out loud while placing my hand first on the arm of Lord Jagannath, then Baladeva and then in front of Subhadra. He also placed a red dot on my forehead, had me sign the book and asked for a donation. Directly behind the Deities of Jagannath was a tall *murti* of a woman. The *pujari* said, "This is Lord Jagannath's mother, Yasoda." At the other end of the small room was a single deity of

Laksmi. The island temple also holds a small Siva-linga temple and one of Bala Krsna.

ATHARANALA BRIDGE

"There is a bridge situated at the entrance of Jagannatha Puri called Atharanala which has eighteen arches. *Athara* means 'eighteen'." (*Madhya-lila* 5.147, purport)

This bridge is mentioned several times in *Caitanya-caritamṛta*. It is symbolic of the emotion of arriving or departing from Jagannath Puri. After Lord Caitanya took *sannyasa*, when He first went to Jagannath Puri, His approach to the bridge signaled His increased ecstasy. He saw the temple *cakra*, offered His obeisances and began to dance in the ecstasy of love of God:

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu laughed, cried, danced and made many ecstatic vibrations and sounds. Although the temple was only six miles away, to Him the distance seemed thousands of miles. Thus walking and walking, the Lord eventually arrived at the place known as Atharanala. Arriving there, He expressed His external consciousness, speaking to Sri Nityananda Prabhu. (*Madhya-lila* 5.146-7)

It was at this point that Lord Caitanya asked Nityananda Prabhu to return His *sannyasa* staff and the Lord learned that Nityananda Prabhu had broken it. From the bridge, Lord Caitanya then went on alone to see Lord Jagannath.

While Lord Caitanya resided in Puri, He also used to send His men to greet incoming devotees at the bridge:

Everyone in the party was very anxious at heart to see Caitanya Mahaprabhu; therefore they hastily went on to Jagannath Puri. When they all arrived at a bridge called Atharanala, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, hearing the news of their arrival, sent two garlands with Govinda. Govinda offered the two garlands to Advaita Acarya and Nityananda Prabhu, and They both became very happy. Indeed, they began chanting the holy name of Krsna on that very spot, and, dancing and dancing, both Advaita Acarya and Nityananda Prabhu reached Jagannath Puri. (*Madhya-lila* 16.37-40)

The present bridge is an addition constructed directly on top of the original brick bridge. In this season the river is mostly dry, filled with blue-grey water-chestnut flowers. Narada Rsi told us the story that when Lord Caitanya was here, the cooks used to prepare so much rice for His followers that the water from the rice, dumped into the river, floated down toward the bridge. Attracted by the aroma, many cows would come and drink. While we were standing on the bridge, viewing the dome of Jagannath temple with its big red flag, a man came up to us and expressed warm appreciation for ISKCON devotees. This was an unusual experience for us in Puri, and we considered it auspicious. The man said that we devotees were actually following the instructions of Lord Jagannath more strictly than the residents of Jagannath Puri. He had heard something about our Ratha-yatras around the world and said this was wonderful service to Lord Jagannath.

Jagannath Puri is overflowing with places and incidents connected with Lord Caitanya. Almost everywhere you go there is some place where the Lord enjoyed sublime pastimes in separation from Radha and Kṛṣṇa or in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with His devotees. The day we visited the bridge I happened to have a stomach-ache and was dragging myself around in bodily consciousness, but even so, I could appreciate how Jagannath Puri is special. I knew my low consciousness was simply a sign of the conditioned state.

INDRADYUMNA SAROVARA

This sacred tank was the scene of another joyous pastime of Lord Caitanya with His devotees, as recorded in *Madhya-lila*, Chapter Fourteen.

It was at Indradyumna Sarovara that Lord Caitanya engaged in water sports with His intimate associates. His pure devotees held water duels with one another. Lord Nityananda dueled with Advaita Acarya, and when Advaita Acarya was defeated, He spoke bad names against Lord Nityananda. When Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya fought in the water against Ramananda Raya, they both lost their gravity and became like children. Lord Caitanya smiled to see their exuberance but asked them to desist. Then Lord Caitanya entered the water and asked Advaita Acarya to take the role of Ananta Sesā. The Lord lay on the bed of Ananta Sesā and floated in the water. Who can

understand the inconceivable pastimes of Lord Caitanya at Indradyumna Sarovara?

The tank of Indradyuma is similar in size to Narendra Sarovara, but the water seems fresher, with no sign of stagnation. On the left, as you enter, there is a temple to King Indradyumna. On the right, there is an old temple with the Deities of Radha and Krsna. Residents frequent the lake, bathing and diving in, and the shore is littered with used nim tooth-sticks. The day we went, our mood was somewhat interrupted by an insistent young man who led us to the altars of each temple and made us recite prayers out loud after him and bow down at his verbal command. We thanked him for his assistance, made a donation, but then observed *darshan* on our own, as we have been shown by Srila Prabhupada.

BRAHMA-MUHURTA

The best hours are the quietest, early in the morning, and once they are gone you cannot concentrate as well as you can in such a pristine atmosphere. Choose what to do in these best hours, whether it is *puja*, Deity worship, reading, writing, walking, and so on, but don't sleep them away. By 6:00 A.M. at Puri, the very best part of the morning is already passed. The surf sound which is dominant all night (unless jarred by music, cats and dogs, etc.) is also dominant at *brahma-muhurta* time. But when the sun appears and brightens the earth and sea, you cannot always notice the dominance of the surf sound. You have to stop and listen for it. Then the day's business begins, the sellers start walking the beach, vacationers call to each other, crows and car horns . . .

HOW KING PRATAPARUDRA WAS ABLE TO RECEIVE LORD CAITANYA'S BLESSINGS: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Just before Lord Caitanya's return to Puri from His South Indian tour, King Prataparudra inquired from Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya about Lord Caitanya. The king considered the Bhattacharya his spiritual master, therefore he believed in his words and accepted Lord Caitanya as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He asked if it was possible to get an interview with Lord Caitanya, but Sarvabhauma said it was very difficult. "He stays in solitary places, and even in

dreams He does not grant interviews to a king."

Sarvabhauma attempted to get an interview for King Prataparudra, but as soon as he uttered the word *king*, Lord Caitanya strongly rejected the request. In this way, He warned others who wish to go back to Godhead that association with women or materialists is very dangerous.

When Ramananda Raya arrived in Puri, he also praised King Prataparudra before Lord Caitanya. Ramananda Raya had asked the king to be allowed to resign and spend his time serving Lord Caitanya, and the king had freely given him permission, granting him a full pension. When Ramananda Raya praised Prataparudra, Lord Caitanya indicated that He would eventually accept the king. Srila Prabhupada writes, "This confirms the fact that the Lord is more pleased when one serves the servant of the Lord."

When Maharaja Prataparudra heard from Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya that Lord Caitanya would not see him, he lamented. He said he would give up his life. Srila Prabhupada writes, "A devotee with Maharaja Prataparudra's determination will certainly be victorious in advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Hearing of the king's determination, Sarvabhauma predicted that the king would one day receive Lord Caitanya's mercy. In this way, King Prataparudra got the blessings of his spiritual master, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Sarvabhauma then suggested a means by which the king could see the Lord. He advised that the king enter the Gundica garden during the Ratha-yatra, after Lord Caitanya had danced and gone to the garden for rest. If the king dressed as an ordinary man, he said, and recited the five chapters from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* about Lord Kṛṣṇa's dancing with the *gopis*, he could in this way catch hold of the Lord's lotus feet.

In another attempt to soften Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to accept the king, the Lord's devotees, led by Nityananda Prabhu, went to Lord Caitanya and praised the king. Lord Caitanya externally appeared to reject the offer, although He was pleased. Nityananda Prabhu then suggested that the Lord could at least send one of His outer garments to the king as a sign of mercy. Otherwise the king, in helplessness, might do something drastic like give up his life or become a mendicant. Lord Caitanya agreed to this, and Maharaja Prataparudra began to worship the Lord's cloth.

Ramananda Raya made further diplomatic moves on the king's behalf to secure him an audience with Lord Caitanya. The Lord did

not agree to these proposals, but He said would see the king's son. When the young prince met Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the boy's yellow dress and youthful beauty reminded Lord Caitanya of Kṛṣṇa. He embraced the boy, who then chanted "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa!" and actually became a devotee filled with ecstatic love of God. "Since then, the fortunate prince was one of the most intimate devotees of the Lord," says *Caitanya-caritamṛta*.

On the occasion of Ratha-yatra, Maharaja Prataparudra accepted the menial task of sweeping the street, and "for this humility, the king received the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He could then observe the mystery of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's activities." (He saw the Lord expand Himself into many forms, to dance with His different devotees in Ratha-yatra.)

When Lord Caitanya was dancing in full ecstasy before Lord Jagannath's cart, He fell down in front of Maharaja Prataparudra, who picked Him up with great respect. Lord Caitanya externally expressed feelings of anger, saying, "I have touched a person who is interested in mundane affairs." But this was just to warn His associates about the proper behavior of a *sannyasi*. Actually, the Lord was pleased with the king, especially for his menial service in sweeping the street.

Finally Maharaja Prataparudra was able to approach Lord Caitanya. "While Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was resting in ecstatic love, Maharaja Prataparudra entered the garden." He had entered in the dress of a Vaisnava, and with the permission of the devotees—and with great courage—he fell down and touched the lotus feet of the Lord. The king began to massage the Lord's legs and recite verses about *rasa-lila* from *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu heard these verses, He was pleased beyond limits, and He said again and again, "Go on reciting, go on reciting." One of the verses moved the Lord to get up and embrace Maharaja Prataparudra. And as the king continued reciting, Lord Caitanya said, "You have given Me invaluable gems, but I have nothing to give you in return. Therefore I am simply embracing you."

One of the verses describes the workers who spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness as most munificent. When He heard this verse, Lord Caitanya cried out to the king, "You are the most munificent! You are the most munificent!" Then Lord Caitanya began to recite a verse along with the king, and both the king and the Lord were trembling, tears flowing from their eyes.

Describing this occasion, Krsnadas Kaviraj writes, "How powerful is the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu! Without even inquiring about the king, the Lord made everything successful." Prabhupada notes, "A student of Krsna consciousness must receive Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy; then the service will quickly succeed. A little service with sincere efforts will convince the Lord that one is a proper candidate for returning home, back to Godhead." All the devotees who had been very kind to King Prataparudra were pleased that he had received so much of the Lord's mercy.

AT THE GARDENS WHERE LORD CAITANYA RECEIVED KING PRATAPARUDRA

Narada Rsi made a friendship with the *chowkidar* of the Jagannath Vallabha temple, who agreed to let us into the temple grounds through the side gate. This whole garden area is called Bala-gandi.

When they reached the place called Bala-gandi, Lord Jagannath stopped his cart and began to look left and right. On the left side the Lord saw the neighborhood of *brahmanas* known as *vipra-sasana* and the coconut tree grove. On the right side He saw nice flower gardens resembling those in the holy place Vrndavana." (*Madhya-lila* 13.193-4)

Lord Jagannath customarily stops here during the Ratha-yatra and receives the offerings of cooked food from whoever wishes to make an offering. During this time Lord Caitanya went into the garden. "Immersed in a great ecstatic emotion, He fell flat on a raised platform there." While the Lord rested amid cool fragrant breezes, other devotees also rested under the trees. King Prataparudra took this opportunity to approach and touch the Lord's lotus feet.

Even today this area is a respite from the noise of Grand Road. The sweet smell of the earth permeates the air, which is filled with the chirping of birds.

The *chowkidar* was willing to let us in through the side gate, but it was locked, so he lifted up the barbed wire of the fence, and in we went. The *chowkidar* led us to a small garden where *sak* seedlings (mustard plants) were growing. He said that this is the exact spot where

Lord Caitanya heard the *Bhagavatam* from Prataparudra. I became doubtful that the seedling garden was the spot, but the *chowkidar*, who is in the third generation of caretakers of this temple and garden, assured us and said that the whole area is known as Asana-pakur in commemoration of the fact that Lord Caitanya rested here. He said there used to be a stone *asana* here, but now it has been broken and is "finished." Also, within his memory the garden used to be filled with fruits and vegetables. Even in its uncared-for state, they are still growing fruits and vegetables on its forty-five acres, and these are used in offerings to Jagannath. But, he said, in former days more fruit grew than they could possibly use, and it used to rot on the trees.

I sat on a broken piece of stone and read to the devotees about **King Prataparudra**. Seeing them sitting on the ground, the *chowkidar* brought a straw mat for everyone. While we read, many *minah* birds chirped and hopped about. The tall coconut trees are just as they are described in *Caitanya-caritamṛta*. The dirt is as soft as dust. A nearby pond is small but clear. From here, over low branches of the banyan tree, you can see the dome of Jagannath Puri temple. Somehow, seeing the temple from a distance is even more pleasing than coming right upon it. Perhaps that is especially so for us who are not allowed to enter. When we are right in front of the Simha-dvara gate, we think, "I cannot enter here." But seen from a distance the *cakra* and dome give full *darshan*.

O king, centuries ago
 you massaged the Lord's feet
 because you were blessed
 by His dear devotees.
 And you were determined,
 and you were humble.

THE KING OF ORISSA AND HIS DEITIES

Yesterday Narada Rsi and Baladeva went to see the king of Orissa. He maintains a large house right off Grand Road, near Jagannath temple. His secretary admitted the devotees but said the king was engaged that day. Behind the secretary's desk is a large photo of the

Jagannath Deities at New Jagannath Puri in Berkeley, California. The secretary was friendly, and he invited the devotees to return the next day. He also informed them that the only remains of the original king's palace are his Deities, which are maintained by the present king in Their original place.

On this cue from the king's secretary, we went to visit the Deities, which supposedly have been worshiped since King Prataparudra's time and were seen by Lord Caitanya. This little temple, known as **Radha-Kanta**, is on the other side of the Jagannath temple from the Gundica temple. The small ruin was originally built from large bricks still manufactured in Puri. We mounted the few steps up to the entrance, but an elderly brahmin stopped us there. ISKCON devotees were allowed in the day before but by a different brahmin. From the entrance we could see the brass Radha-Krishna Deities in the darkness of Their inner chamber. An old woman lying at the entrance told Narada Rsi that this was the king's palace and his Deities. Next door to this ruin is a small temple with Siva-lingas, the outside of the building painted yellow, with a few figure decorations. Lord Caitanya supposedly also visited here.

We walked toward the Siva temple, but the same brahmin ran ahead and locked the door. I then went to the window and looked in, but the brahmin objected to that also. I then petted a calf who was rummaging nearby in broken pots—just to do something that the brahmin might not object to, if that was possible. Another man came up and asked if we were from ISKCON. He said he knew of Mayapur and seemed surprised that we were barred from this temple. The elderly brahmin had now mounted the stairs to his temple again to stand guard. He gestured to us to indicate that if we got a letter from the king of Orissa, then we could enter this temple.

THE PURI OCEAN

The night we arrived it was like a mystical rendezvous—the sea and moon right outside our window. After being in town and feeling much like foreigners and becoming tired of hearing the voices, horns and motorcycle engines, it's reassuring to hear the constant sound of the sea.

The ocean makes no discrimination. Unlike other Puri places of

Lord Caitanya's pastimes, the ocean hasn't turned into a ruin, nor has it been taken over by families who tell dubious stories. It's the ocean.

Of course, there are salesmen on the ocean to disrupt your thinking, but if you go into the water they don't follow you. And in the waves you think, "Lord Caitanya bathed in these waves." Late at night you hear fishermen in the water calling to one another. When you see their nets, you think of the fisherman who caught Lord Caitanya in his net. That man developed symptoms of love of God, but he couldn't relate to them. At first, he thought he was ghostly haunted. Even after the "exorcist," Swarupa Damodara, slapped him, he still worried that he might be crazy and therefore unable to support his family. But he was blessed by touching the body of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who lived for eighteen years in Puri and bathed daily in this sea.

FACING THE SEA

On the beach,
it was May-June,
Sanatan walked the blazing sands
barefoot
because he did not want to touch
the priests on the Grand Road,
thinking himself unworthy.

The sand burned his skin
but he kept walking
a long way,
thinking himself unworthy.
He did not feel much pain.

When the Lord heard of this,
He was pleased with His servant,
and embraced him.
"Who else but you
could show this example?"

PREPARATION FOR VISITING A HOLY PLACE

Before going out each day, I try to prepare myself by reading about the *tirtha* or *lila*. I try to think of the essence of the *lila*, what it teaches us, and how to apply it. And then we discuss among ourselves, to seek a prayerful attitude so that we may receive the mercy of the *tirtha* and the saint (Haridas Thakur etc.) once we are there. This kind of preparation is helpful because the *tirtha*'s externals are often distracting.

And because visiting *tirthas* is intense, we sometimes take a day off from touring. We chant extra rounds and read in order to become more introspective. That way we can get the best out of our visits. For example, there is a little deserted building in the Aitota section of Puri which the owners claim was used by Lord Caitanya for His rest during the Gundica festival. One can't even enter, but only look through the lattice. Although there's not much to see, still, if we're in an enlivened spiritual consciousness, we will be able to appreciate it and think of Lord Caitanya for our eternal benefit.

INTERVIEW WITH SRI SRI GAJAPATI MAHARAJA DIBYA SINGH DEV

Baladeva and Narada Rsi were allowed to see him at the scheduled time. He is a cultured young man, educated in the West. He was pleased to receive the devotees.

They asked him questions about King Prataparudra, but the king didn't know much. The kingship of Orissa is an office, and the present king isn't in the same family as Prataparudra (the royal lineage has changed due to revolutions and other circumstances).

They asked if he could help us dispel the myth that Prataparudra became weak after becoming a devotee. The king had heard scholars interpret it that way, but he said that others believe Lord Caitanya's advent came at a crucial time and started a renaissance of spiritual culture in Orissa. The present king said, "If King Prataparudra lost a few kilometers of territory, still, the gain in the spiritual field was more because that gain was eternal."

He explained his understanding of Jagannath as universal. No other Deity in the Hindu pantheon, he said, has received such a wide

review, and the king attributes a good deal of this to ISKCON's influence.

To our questions about why ISKCON devotees can't enter the temple, he replied that Puri is the seat of brahmin orthodoxy. It's one of the most conventional places in India, where the same rituals have been followed for thousands of years without any reformation. He said there was great opposition by the priests to the introduction of electricity in the temple, what to speak of a change such as allowing foreigners, which is something that wasn't even conceived of until fifty years ago. He said that Jagannath is emanating mercy all over the world and we simply have to tune in from wherever we are. It's not necessary to see His form in the temple, but we can go about our devotional service based on our devotion to Him. And we can see Him when He comes out once a year.

The king said that his own office has been stripped of all secular power and responsibility, and even though he is the chairman of the temple board, that position is also one of a figurehead. But despite all the political changes, he said, the religious connection of the king to Jagannath remains. "I feel I'm not the king. I'm a servant of Lord Jagannath. He's the king." At most religious functions connected to Jagannath, the king or his representative performs the rituals. And the main one is sweeping the road before the chariot during Ratha-yatra.

FINDING LORD CAITANYA IN NILACALA

Caitanya-caritamṛta references to Jagannath Puri aren't hard to find. Look at the chapter on Raghunath Goswami—he came to Puri to be with the Lord. Look at the chapter about Vallaba Bhatta—he also came to Puri to see the Lord, bringing huge quantities of garlands and the *maha-prasad* of Jagannath, which he offered to Lord Caitanya and His devotees.

But it is difficult for me to go to Grand Road and think how Lord Caitanya danced in this very spot and how everyone observed Him. Of course, now is the off-season—but when you come at Ratha-yatra with millions of people, it might be even more difficult to imagine His sweet pastimes here.

I've said that the ocean in particular is unchanged by man, but as

I sit on the porch and look out at it, watching the waves curve and break, I cannot come closer to devotional service. Therefore, the essence of association with Lord Caitanya and His great devotees is to hear from them and to render them service. So I am reading my spiritual master's purports, hearing his tapes, and serving in his ISKCON.

DARK SAILS AT PURI

Dark sails of fisherboats at sea
 & chickens pecking in the hotel yard,
 a raging house-fire across the way,
The Statesman's report
 of Reagan's State of the Union speech—
 all these are signs of illusion and ruin.
 And the Sikh folks are taking photos
 down by the surf.

O ISKCON devotees!
 The world is crying out
 for want of devotion
 & lack of knowledge
 of the Absolute Truth.
 Let's settle our quarrels
 and get down to the work
 of pleasing our Master.

VISIT TO AITOTA

The Puri neighborhood known as Aitota is described in the *Caitanya-caritamṛta*:

In the evening, after finishing His dancing in the yard of the Gundica temple, the Lord observed the *arati* ceremony. Thereafter He went to a place called Aitota and took rest for the night.
 (*Madhya-lila* 14.65)

Lord Caitanya's *lila* in Aitota occurred after Lord Jagannath traveled from His *mandir* to Gundica temple. While Lord Jagannath

stayed for nine days in Gundica, Lord Caitanya used to frequent the gardens of Gundica, chanting, dancing, and taking *prasad*. Krsnadas Kaviraj writes, "Three times daily—morning, noon, and evening—He would perform *sankirtana* in the yard of the Gundica temple. At this time Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu felt that Lord Krsna had returned to Vrndavana. Thinking thus, His feelings of separation from Krsna subsided."

Aitota is sometimes called Jaitota, after the name of a white aromatic flower. During the nine days when Lord Jagannath stayed at Gundica, Lord Caitanya celebrated feasts and distributed *prasad* to His devotees. Because the area of Aitota is filled with many trees, the feasts were known as *bana bhoji* (feasts in the forest).

VISIT TO YAJNA NRSIMHA TEMPLE

At first they did not want to let us in. Then the priest agreed—if we would pay a hundred and one rupees. Why so much? Because after we left, he said, he will have to cleanse the whole temple due to our contaminating presence. Anyway, we agreed.

The temple has a tall dome, constructed in the style of Jagannath Puri temple. The priest said that this temple is older than Lord Jagannath's because the inaugural *yajna* was held here and then Lord Jagannath's temple was constructed. As we entered we saw a framed print of the ISKCON painting of Lord Nrsimhadeva tearing apart Hiranyakasipu. The priest said it was given to them by a Hare Krsna devotee.

Narrow halls lead straight into the Deity chamber. Even from outside you can see straight in and glimpse the Deity. Nrsimhadeva is very impressive, about four feet tall, marble. He was wearing a winter covering, but the priest let us see His form. With the aid of a lighted match held under the Lord's arms, we saw in a recessed area a second Deity of Nrsimhadeva behind the first. The priest said that the Deity in front is called Santa Nrsimha (sober). Anyone who sees Him will be cooled down; all his anger, frustration and anxiety will vanish. And the *murti* in back is called Raga Nrsimha (anger). He is the internal mood of Nrsimha. When the Muslim Kalapahad attacked and was breaking the Deities, he saw Santa Nrsimhadeva and his anger subsided. So he did not break the Deity.

Santa Nrsimha's features are humanlike, with a sharp human nose and curvy human moustache, but outstretched tongue. They say that Lord Caitanya took *darsan* here during His Gundica pastimes.

We circumambulated the temple and saw artistically done bas-reliefs in marble halfway up the temple dome. One is of Lord Upendra taking His step to pierce the outer shell of the universe. The bas-relief on the rear of the dome is of Visnu, but His arms are broken, the mischevious work of Kalapahad. The next figure around the dome is Varaha, and then there's one of Krsna and Balarama on horseback. The priest explained this one with a long story.

The temple is painted red and white in horizontal stripes corresponding to different layers and dimensions of the stone construction. A young cow was eating fresh-cut green grasses while we were there, and *tulasis* were also blooming. In a small enclosure is a deity of Hanuman.

After we left the temple I expressed to the devotees how we could see things from the Puri pandits' point of view. We say that the *karmi* intends to spend his money on sinful things, so if we take it away from him and spend it for Krsna, that is his gain. Similarly, the Puri pandits know we Westerners have money, and so they see no harm in trying to get as much of it as they can for service to the Lord. But the fact is that many ISKCON *sadhus* don't have much money and thus they aren't able to enter temples like Nrsimha's. And even if we have money, it's not for our sense gratification.

"Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu also cleansed the Nrsimha temple inside and outside. Finally He rested a few minutes and then began dancing." (*Madhya-lila* 12.136)

This verse describes the same temple we visited. Prabhupada writes in the purport, "The Nrsimha temple is a nice temple, just outside the Gundica temple. In this temple there is a great festival on the day of Nrsimha Caturdasi."

THE TEMPLE WHERE LORD CAITANYA RESTED AFTER GUNDICA-MARJANA

This is a small chapel near the Nrsimha temple. Outside is a hand-painted sign: "SHREE SHREE KRUSHNA CHAITANY MAHAPRABHU TAKE REST HEAR AFTER GUNDICA MARJANA."

After being exposed to the blazing sun, it was a relief to stand inside this cool chapel built in commemoration of Lord Caitanya. There is a yellow *murti* of the Lord, His right hand upraised, and little figures of Radha and Kṛṣṇa at His feet. Schoolboys gathered while we were inside, and they were especially interested to watch my notes being made in English script, with a Pilot Rollpoint pen. An old *babaji* in saffron came in carrying *japa-mala*. He said that this spot is mentioned in the scripture called the Panji and also somewhere in *Caitanya-caritamṛta*.

The Nṛsimhadeva temple and the little chapel are in the village called Matia. This is named after a pastime of Lord Nṛsimha's. Long ago, when Indradyumna was king, he performed a sacrifice to the Deity and used so much ghee that it poured off and became strewn over the earth until the earth became dark. Thus, Matia (clay) village.

A GARDEN IN AITOTA

After our visit to these two places we traveled a short distance to another part of Aitota. By doing this we followed in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya: "After offering obeisances to Lord Nṛsimha, whose temple was nearby, the Lord entered a garden. In the garden, Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu sat down with the other devotees." (*Madhya-līla* 12.152-3)

Some of the nicest gardens in Aitota are disappearing due to the construction of a bus stand by the Puri municipality. As we sat in a garden, under the shade of a cashew tree, our peace was disrupted by the rumbling of an old steamroller which was tamping down the ground for the bus stand.

The Gaudiya brahmin who lives here says that Lord Caitanya rested and feasted in this spot during the nine-day Gundica festival. There are small ponds here and naked boys swimming in them. Villagers are passing on the soft dust footpaths. A few calves and cows are helping themselves to wild grass. These rural scenes seem just like it must have been five hundred years ago.

Prabhupada stated that India is meant for preserving the simple village life of living in a small hut, chanting, and worshiping God and the cow. What do people gain by constructing a bus stand and running the latest* Luxury Video Coach and other buses to

Bhubaneswar and further points? Of course, it's impossible to convince them not to go ahead with material progress. The rest of the world, which has been quick to invade or exploit India, is gaining all amenities, so why should India lag behind? But Prabhupada said she will be left behind materially despite all efforts. Like the brahmin who lost his caste by eating at a Muslim's house, Indians will lose their spiritual position but remain half-hungry. ISKCON is meant to use the wealth, energy and ingenuity of the West to help spread Vedic culture. The blind man and the lame man should walk together. So let us do it. In the meantime, a few gardens still remain in Aitota.

Brown-black heifer,
 you are lucky there is grass left
 in Aitota
 and your owner allows you free pasture.
 He wears Gaudiya Vaisnava *tilak*,
 and he has no objection
 to Western devotees
 sitting under his tree.
 But he doesn't like us
 to take snapshots,
 and he is right—
 "It's a sacred place."
 He doesn't mind *kirtan*,
 so let us sing the holy names.

NO-SHOES KIRTAN

"By performing congregational chanting of the Hare Krsna *mantra*, one can destroy the sinful condition of material existence, purify the unclean heart, and awaken all varieties of devotional service." (*Antya-lila* 20.13)

Today we joined forces with two other visiting ISKCON devotees. We held a seven-man *kirtan* by the Simha-dvara gate. The police wanted us to move a little, so we stationed ourselves behind two sitting cows, who provided a natural barrier. The size of the crowd varied according to the intensity of our *kirtan*: the more we danced and became enlivened, the bigger the crowd. But agitators also

moved in quickly, trying to take away some of our audience, by speaking with angry gestures toward us and toward the sky, as if we were doing something condemned.

This time we were careful not to wear objectionable shoes or sweaters; most of us wore flip-flops or no shoes and simple *dhotis*. But several people in the crowd insisted that we all take off our shoes, until only I remained with my blue rubber flip-flops on. One boy tapped me on the arm, but I ignored him. I didn't want to do it at their bidding. And yet I wanted to be relieved of my pride. Finally, one old man went to the devotee beside me and gestured that he should ask me to please remove my shoes. The devotee then asked, and I was happy to dance barefoot on the same road where Lord Caitanya danced. Devotees and Puri residents smiled at me—it was clear that I'd been retaining shoes simply out of false pride.

The only person to join us in singing today was a Gaudiya Vaisnava widow with *tilak* similar to ours. Maybe she had seen Srila Prabhupada or she knew of our *kirtans*. The crowd watched attentively as we danced and raised the volume of our voices above that of the loudspeakers that blasted songs near the Simha-dvara gate.

In the break between chanters, Narada Rsi spoke humbly about Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada. "*Nama pracar*: in every town and village." As he spoke, I looked at the ground and at the crowd. I knew he was speaking simple Vaisnava *parampara*, which is what Prabhupada wants us to do, and I felt awed. Nothing fancy, nothing concocted—the perfect message so sorely needed even in the holy town of Jagannath Puri. After forty-five minutes, an agitator convinced a policeman to ask us to move. So we circumbulated the four gates of the temple, chanting Hare Krsna.

WHY VISIT SO MANY PLACES?

From *Saranagati* (31.3.) by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura: "May I visit all the holy places associated with the *lilas* of Lord Caitanya and His devotees." (Quoted in *Antya-lila* 4.211, purport)

"A devotee should make a point of visiting all the places where Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu performed His pastimes. Indeed, pure devotees of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu even want to see the places He visited only for hours or minutes." (*Antya-lila* 4.211, purport)

Pure devotees of Lord Caitanya regard any place where He

stayed or even walked through as a worshipable *tirtha*. When Lord Caitanya started on His tour to Vrindavan, King Prataparudra ordered that "wherever Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took His bath or crossed to the other side of the river, they should establish a memorial column and make that place a great place of pilgrimage. 'Indeed', said the king, 'I will take my bath there. And let me also die there.'" (*Madhya-lila* 16.114-5)

REVISIT TO SIDDHA-BAKULA

At noon when there was an *upala-bhoga* offering in the place called *bhoga-vardhana-khanda*, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu would go outside the temple. Before going outside, He used to stand at the Garuda-stambha column and offer His obeisances and prayers. Afterward, the Lord would visit Siddha-bakula, where Haridas Thakura lived. After visiting Haridas Thakura, the Lord would then return to His own place at the abode of Kasi Misra. (*Madhya-lila* 15.6, purport)

He used to go visit these three great personalities [Haridas Thakur, Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami] on His way to His own residence. If one of these three was not present, He would meet the others. That was His regular practice. (*Madhya-lila* 1.64-65)

The first time we visited Siddha-bakula, I wasn't aware how many of Lord Caitanya's pastimes with Haridas Thakur, Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami took place there. By reading *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, I now know better the importance of Siddha-bakula, although I can only touch a drop of it. As Kṛṣṇadas Kaviraj writes, "No one can describe all the qualities of Haridas Thakur. One may say something about them just to purify himself."

It was here that Lord Caitanya visited Haridas daily and heard from him how the low-born humans and even the nonmoving living entities can become liberated just by chanting and hearing the names of Kṛṣṇa. Haridas Thakur asserted that even if the holy name is improperly or imperfectly uttered, that shadow of the name (*nama-bhasa*) is sufficient to vanquish the accumulated sins of many lifetimes and grant one liberation. For evidence, Haridas gave the example of Ajamil, who accidentally chanted the name of Narayana at the time of his death and attained the spiritual world. This discourse

about the glories of the holy name gives us great hope, for even our own imperfect chanting, which sometimes seems to produce no perceivable result, is actually relieving us from countless miserable reactions. We hanker for the more advanced stages of chanting, but we beg for the blessings of Namacarya Haridas Thakur so that we may go on chanting. If we can realize how helpless we are materially and spiritually, then we will depend fully on the chanting of Hare Krsna.

THOUGHTS AT SIDDHA-BAKULA

I

It's the third windy day in a row,
the surf breaking in three places at once,
the sun rising behind thick clouds,
and we're visiting Siddha-bakula,
this time with a plan
to sit and chant *japa*.
We hope they'll leave us alone.

II

A tenderfoot,
I perch on the porch
of a broken *kutir*
chanting my sixteen rounds.
Watching birds in the *bakula*,
hearing the breeze on its leaves.
I think, "It's pleasant."
But spiritual life
is also hard.

III

Paying me no attention,
a small boy in red shorts
picks up *bakula* fruits
leaving his bare footprints
in the dust along with mine.

IV

Here Rupa Goswami recited
 his transcendental dramas.
 "A continuous shower of nectar,"
 said Ramananda Raya.
 And Lord Caitanya embraced him.
 In this place Sanatana Goswami
 spoke his mind about suicide,
 but the Lord admonished him:
 "I have many things to do
 through you
 in Mathura-Vrindavan,
 but you want to give up your body.
 How can I tolerate this?"

V

Under Siddha-bakula
 this body and ego
 mildly lament.
 Only for a brief time
 can I keep my mind
 on the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

VI

Bakula arms break
 through stone walls.
 This tree of devotion
 lingers after Haridas,
 as we tie our wish-stone
 to its trunk.

Leaving Siddha-bakula,
 I gather fallen leaves.

ALALANATHA

When Jagannatha was absent from the temple, Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who could not see Him, felt separation and left Jagannatha Puri to go to a place known as Alalanatha. (*Madhya-lila* 1.122)

Alalanatha is also known as Brahmagiri. This place is about fourteen miles from Jagannatha Puri and is also on the beach. There is a temple of Jagannatha there. At the present moment a police station and post office are situated there because so many people come to see the temple. (*Madhya-lila* 1.22, purport)

As we arrived at the gate, it was still dawn, and none of the *pujaris* were present. The temple is very old. The entire walled-in area is about a hundred feet wide by two hundred feet long, with large stone blocks for a floor. The main dome is constructed in the Jagannath Puri style, with a red flag on top. At the base of the dome are sculpted figures of powerful warriors fighting one another. There is also a sculpture of the boar incarnation: At the rear of the dome there is an inset sculpture of Nrsimha, with Hiranyakasipu on His lap. Halfway up the dome, large gargoylike figures jut out. Coming round the dome, I see an inset sculpture of Lord Vamana piercing the outer shell of the universe. All these are very old but in fairly good shape. Unfortunately, there is also graffiti by Oriyan youths, saying the equivalent of "Ravi was here, 1971." In the rear of the courtyard is a smaller, white-washed Orissan-style temple.

There are three buildings in a row. The first and smallest structure (about twenty feet tall) is the Jaga-mohana, and it encloses the Garuda-stambha. The second building (about forty feet high) is the Majhi Devla, which once enclosed the bodily impression of Lord Caitanya. The third tower (sixty feet) is Bada Devla, the temple of Alalanatha.

Soon after we arrived, a sweeper woman came and unlocked the first temple for us. Within is a bas-relief of Garbhodaksayi Visnu, with Brahma on the stem of the lotus. The Garuda on the *stambha* has an interesting nose-beak, a combination of human and bird. On either side of the entrance to the next temple are painted *murtis*—Brahma on the left, and Siva on the right. The sweeper woman was quite friendly and offered me a handful of *tulasi*. But she had no key to allow us entrance into the next temple, so we waited for the *pujari* who was supposed to have been there by six.

While waiting, we sat outside the temple and read aloud:

After seeing the bathing ceremony of Lord Jagannatha, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu became very happy. But when Lord Jagannatha retired after this ceremony, Lord Caitanya became very unhappy because He could not see Him. Due to the separation of Lord Jagannatha, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu felt

great anxiety such as the *gopis* feel in separation from Kṛṣṇa. In this condition He gave up all association and went to Alalanatha. The devotees following the Lord came into His presence and requested Him to return to Puri. They submitted that the devotees from Bengal were coming to Purushottama-kṣetra. In this way Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya brought Lord Caitanya back to Jagannatha Puri. (*Madhya-lila* 11.62-64)

It thus appears that Lord Caitanya had a very intimate relationship with the Deity here. After the annual bathing ceremony of Lord Jagannath, the Lord is removed to His private apartment for a period of about twenty days, and for that duration of time Lord Caitanya intended to stay alone at Alalanatha. Kṛṣṇadas Kaviraj writes, "Both Nityananda Prabhu and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya greatly endeavored to take Sri Caitanya back to Jagannath Puri."

For us, it is mercy that the proprietors of this temple will allow us to enter and thus share in these pastimes of Lord Caitanya. We do not know what it is like to feel such intense separation from Lord Jagannath, yet we can appreciate it somewhat by hearing of the Lord's pastimes. Even today in ISKCON temples, Prabhupada's followers sometimes feel transcendental separation from Jagannath during *anavasara*. Although we are neophyte devotees, we become accustomed to the daily *darsan* of our worshipable Jagannath Deity, and it's a shock when His altar is bare.

By 6:25 A.M. another worshiper showed up, wearing only a brief *dhoti* and hugging himself in the chilly air. He chanted the *maha-mantra* (which is the first time I can recall hearing someone chant it since we have been in Puri).

As the sun began to rise we decided to explore the little temple in the rear of the courtyard. Within this temple we saw a full-size Sadbhuj Deity. The Deity is painted in various colors—green arms of Lord Rama and blue arms of Kṛṣṇa. The golden *sannyasi* holds large *tulasi* beads in the right hand and a waterpot in the left. He is wearing a white cloth *dhoti*. At the base of the Deity is a sign that says "Sarabanga Chinha," which means "the entire body print of Lord Caitanya." The rest of the small temple building is taken up with a large piece of stone which has imprints in it that are said to be of the Lord's body while He was resting. One cannot exactly make out the shape of a human body, but there are definite imprints in different places. While we were taking the *darsan* of Sadbhuj and the Lord's imprints, a small old lady came in and prayed in Oriya, "O Lord, You are my only life." She then placed her beads on the imprint of

Lord Caitanya's body and at the feet of the Sadbhuj. She indicated Sadbhuj and said to us, "Caitanyadeva."

When the *pujari* finally arrived, he gave us only a brief entry. The middle temple seems to be mostly empty, but we could see into the last temple—the beautiful form of Kṛṣṇa, Alalanatha. He is a full-size Deity, with slim waist, very black and shiny. He has an arch surrounding Him made of the same marble as His body. Two small deities at His feet are Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī. He wore a movable gold *tilak*. His whole appearance is shiny and light and happy.

At first the *pujari* said we could not go into the inner temple, but then he allowed us. But he was brusque about it and gave us only a moment's *darshan*. Once outside, he explained that he didn't object to us but was afraid the villagers would be angry that we'd been allowed in. He also informed us that the impressions of Lord Caitanya had formerly been in the middle temple, but were moved a hundred years ago after a Gaudiya Vaishava named Ramdas Maharaja built a special temple for them in the rear courtyard. He told us that the front gate is under going repair, so we gave a donation for it and thanked him for giving us *darshan* of Sri Alalanatha.

Of course, the transcendental emotions of this *tirtha* are far away from me, and I cannot reach them even if I travel for millions of miles at the speed of mind. Therefore, I can only speak of what I saw and felt: the friendliness of the sweeping lady, the devotion of the old woman at the Sadbhuj temple, and the guarded friendliness of the *pujari*. We also have in our hands pieces of sandalwood from the feet of Alalanatha and some stories of recent happenings at the temple. Śrīla Prabhupada's purport gives us the clue how to go further. He says that after Lord Caitanya was induced to return from Alalanatha to Jagannath Puri, He felt unbounded lamentation due to separation from Lord Jagannath. But when the devotees began chanting the holy name congregationally, His mind was pacified by the ecstasy of chanting. Prabhupada writes:

Being absolute, Jagannatha is identical in person, form, picture, *kirtana* and all other circumstances. Therefore when Caitanya Mahāprabhu heard the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, He was pacified. Previously, he had been feeling very morose due to separation from Jagannatha. The conclusion is that whenever a *kirtana* of pure devotees takes place, the Lord is immediately present. By chanting the holy names of the Lord, we associate with the Lord personally. (*Madhya-līla* 1.126, purport)

After leaving Alalanatha temple, we met a Gaudiya devotee who invited us to go to see the Sri Brahmagiri Gaudiya Math of Alalanatha which is right next to the Alalanatha temple. Entering this *math*, we met a disciple of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's named Sripati Brahmacari. We also met a *sannyasi*, Sadhu Maharaja. They gave us a straw mat to sit on. It was too early for the *darshan* of the Deities. The *math* is run by Bharat Maharaja, who is connected to the Gaudiya Math of Calcutta. It is nicely situated within a coconut grove, and the inmates were friendly to us, exchanging *dandavats* and greetings. One of them said he heard that ISKCON was planning to open a temple in Jagannatha Puri, and he encouraged us to do so.

The *pujari* at Alalanatha temple also advised us to go see Raya Ramananda's house, which is in a place called Benta Pura, about a kilometer away, near a rice mill. We were allowed entrance there and saw a *kutir*-sized building painted light green with outside paintings of *sankirtan* devotees. Right next to the temple is an *amlaki* tree, whose branches spread over the *kutir*. Within this little temple is an attractive full-size Deity of Lord Caitanya with shaven head. Seated beside Him in saffron robes is Ramananda Raya. It was a wonderful treat to get *darshan* of the Lord and His most intimate devotee. The people here said that Ramananda Raya's birthplace is about another kilometer from this place, but there is no worship conducted there.

ON THE BEACH NEAR HARIDAS THAKUR'S TOMB

Before entering the ocean,
we bend down
and touch the water to our heads,
because Lord Caitanya
bathed the body of Haridas Thakur
in the sea
and then declared,
"From this day on,
this sea has become
a great pilgrimage site."

Haridas Thakur knew
the Lord soon would close
His pastimes in this world.
And he didn't want to see it.

In old age, Haridas
slowed down his chanting
of 300,000 daily names.
And he begged the Lord
"Kindly let my body
fall down in Your presence."
So the Lord came to Haridas
with many devotees,
and they loudly chanted.
Holding the lotus feet
of Lord Caitanya
on his heart,
and taking the dust of the feet
of all the devotees
on his head,
Haridas passed away.
And they were reminded
of the passing away of Bhisma.

On the beach
before the steady roar
& the spewing of white caps
on a windy winter day,
I think of the Puri brahmins
who say we are bogus.
Even when we chanted Hare Krsna,
they denounced us to the crowd:
"At any cost, you cannot go in!
No Hindu in Puri
should associate with you!"

But no one restricts us
from sitting on the sand.
The Puri sea
is open for all
just as the sun-god
pierces through the clouds.
And the Namacarya is blessing us:
there is nothing to be sorry.

LAST DAYS IN PURI

Our duties prompt us to leave Puri. We should not become over-familiar in a holy *dhama* thinking, "I have seen all the places. And I know well the mentality of the residents."

But how to avoid an offensive attitude toward those who reject us? Don't we have to defend against their slander of the holy name? At least we cannot agree with them and disbelieve in the power of the holy name to transform the most sinful. Isn't their criticism a criticism of our founder-*acarya*? So how can we be silent? For myself, I have not remained entirely silent, but I have mostly let the pandits speak for themselves. There is no need to be personally angry or to seek confrontations with them. Certainly enough of Purushottama-ksetra was made available to us. We were even able to honor Jagannath *prasad* and to chant outdoors within sight of Patita Pavana.

The residents of Purushottama-ksetra are fortunate despite their particular viewpoint. Somehow Lord Jagannath engages them as His servants and that is His mercy. He allows them to chant His name and to live in His *dhama*. If He does not like it, then by His will—not ours—He will bring about change. We should not allow ourselves to be baited into calling others bad names just because we are called a bad name. When Lord Caitanya was offended by Ramachandra Puri, He said, "He has said nothing wrong. A *sannyasi* should be very strict." Similarly, the pandits are right in noting that we are low-born. In these bodies we were addicted to meat-eating, and they will not let us forget it. So it is up to us to tolerate these reminders and prove ourselves true followers of Lord Caitanya: Let them force us to be humble, lower than the straw in the street.

And they were right to point us out as ignorant, wearing shoes on *harinama*. "They don't know anything!" they said. And when I was writing my notes in the house of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, a boy of that house remarked to Narada Rsi, "What is he writing? What does he know? I know the scriptures very well." At first I took his words as outrageous pride. But if I look within myself, considering his words, I find they are true. It is I who am proud. I am proud of my material education and my modern American-English expressions. I am proud of my so-called fair body although it is meant for death. I am proud of my *mleccha* "aristocracy" as an American. And proud of my material wealth.

The pandits say to their fellow Puri residents, "Ask these

Americans for money. We can use it in the service of Jagannath." These words are also true—we must give up all our money for the service of the Lord. We prefer to spend for Krsna on the order of our spiritual master in the Krsna consciousness movement, but at least the pandits are right in reminding us that wealth is one of our very few qualifications. Thinking in this way, I find the goddess Saraswati speaking through the apparently insulting words of the pandits. And I feel relieved of my offensive resentment towards the residents of the *dhama*.

Even if the brahmins did let us in the temple, would I be able to see Jagannath Swami with love? By not allowing us *darshan*, the pandits increase our eagerness: they create in us a mood of separation from Krsna. They turn us to the holy name as our only resort. For these things we thank them.

LAST MORNING IN PURI

Sitting on the second-floor porch as the sun rises in a clear sky. Suddenly a heifer comes into view, then two, then three. They are well-shaped, brown with large, liquidy eyes. Two of them spar off in the sand and butt heads. I look back to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and continue dividing a chapter into sections. A few minutes later, the dogs appear, barking at one another. They give a different view on life than the heifers. Now the sweets salesman comes walking up with a long pole on his shoulder, carrying two pots suspended from ropes on the ends of the pole. He utters a few cries towards the building and then walks off without any sales.

I go back to *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I am reading "Dhrtarastra Quits Home" and recording straight summaries of the verses and purports. The activities on the beach are distractions from my real purpose—thinking of Krsna in the pages of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. But the morning life of the beach is also Krsna's energy: through *sastra* I can appreciate that He is behind it all. He is the eye of the rising sun, the sustainer of all moving and nonmoving entities. Prabhupada has said that in this way we can appreciate *Srimad-Bhagavatam* even beyond the verses and purports. Krsna is the regulator of the ocean tides, and He is represented as time, which is symbolized in the ancient shifting sands. The blue sky is His reflection, and all beings emanate from Him, including the sea birds and the fishermen.

In Jagannath Puri, the holy place where Bhaktisiddhanta

Saraswati first appeared, Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is always present for those with the pure vision to see Him. We have visited and retained whatever we could. Now we have to move on, for service to our spiritual master.

APPENDIX



SRILA PRABHUPADA IN JAGANNATH PURI (1977)

The following is an excerpt from *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*, Vol. 6 by Satsvarupa das Goswami.

Since arriving in Bhubaneswar, Srila Prabhupada had several times talked about going to Jagannatha Puri, about an hour away. Since he had hopes of one day building a big center in Puri, he wanted to see some plots of land for sale. He hadn't been to Puri, he said, since 1958. Since his Western disciples were not allowed to enter the Jagannatha temple, Prabhupada said he would not enter either. But he would go to Puri to see what land was available.

Early one morning Prabhupada set out in his car for Puri, on the Bay of Bengal. He looked at several properties there, but either their locations were poor or the buildings were deteriorated, or both. Prabhupada walked along the beach with his men, and the surf was pounding. "I was jumping here," he laughed. "In 1920 or '21 I came here. At that time I was married. I was married in 1918. I came after appearing for my B.A. examination. And because I was jubilant, I was jumping. When the waves came I was jumping. Now it is fifty-seven years after. They say we do not change bodies, but where is that body? Now I am walking with stick. Then I was jumping. I am still here. I remember. But the body has changed. What is the difficulty to understand? I am the same. Otherwise, how I am remembering all these things? But that body is now lost. *Tatha dehantara-praptih*. Why this simple philosophy these rascals cannot understand?"

Srila Prabhupada stayed a day at the beachside Tourist Bungalow, and one of his Godbrothers, Syamasundara Brahmachari, from the local Purusottama Gaudiya Math visited. After he left, Sri Sevasiva Rath, a member of the *pujari* committee of the Jagannatha temple, also came to visit. Prabhupada spoke to him about the

possibility of ISKCON devotees entering the Jagannatha temple. To bar the Western Vaisnavas from entering the temple was prejudiced and ignorant. Since the members of the Krsna consciousness movement were fully engaged in spiritual life, they should not be considered unfit simply because of their birth status or race. Sevasiva Rath was friendly and agreed with Srila Prabhupada; he promised he would do what he could to help. He also told Prabhupada about a book he had just published and invited him to attend a small *pandal* meeting the next evening, at which the book would be inaugurated. Prabhupada agreed.

Later, Prabhupada was sitting on the veranda outside his room at the Tourist Bungalow. As he sat watching Shantilal preparing lunch in the back of Gargamuni's van, he could smell the aromatic spices cooking in the *ghee*. He called to Gargamuni Swami and asked that a plate of Shantilal's cooking be brought to him when it was ready. Soon Prabhupada was enjoying a meal of rice, *dal*, *puris*, spicy *sabjis*, and chutney. He said that Shantilal cooked wonderfully and that devotees in all the ISKCON temples should learn this art. If the meat-eaters could take such *prasadam*, he said, they would give up their sinful habit.

As Prabhupada sat in his hotel room that evening with a few disciples at his feet, he reminisced about how he had come to America in 1965 and had suffered two heart attacks at sea. "They say that anyone who gets a third heart attack," said Prabhupada, "they must expire. I had two attacks on the ship, and then in New York a third one—paralyzed. Left side was paralyzed. I do not know how I was saved. And one girl, that captain's wife, she studied astrology. She said, 'Swami, if you can survive your seventieth year, then you will live for one hundred years.'" Srila Prabhupada and his disciples laughed.

"So," Prabhupada continued, "somehow or other I have survived my seventieth year. I do not know whether . . . They say I will live for a hundred years. But seventieth year was severe. Three heart attacks and paralysis. And I was without my family. At that time none of you were with me. I was alone. I wasn't dependent on anyone. But on the ship I saw that Krsna was going to save me. I was going for His mission."

The next morning, from the porch, Srila Prabhupada was watching the devotees swimming in the Bay of Bengal. Calling Hari-sauri over, he said he would like to bathe in the ocean and asked him what he thought about it. Hari-sauri and the other devotees present

all thought it was a good idea. Sea water was supposed to be very good for health, they said. Prabhupada said he would try it and after taking his morning massage walked down to the seashore, wearing his *gamcha* and carrying a towel. The ocean shore was about a hundred yards from the hotel, and by the time Prabhupada reached the water, all the devotees were running after him in their *gamchas*.

Some of the devotees were already in the ocean, and when Prabhupada reached the water's edge, they all gathered around him. As the waves glided in and swirled around Prabhupada's feet, Hari-sauri scooped palmfuls of water and began to bathe Prabhupada's body—his arms, chest, and head—washing away the mustard seed oil he had applied during the massage. Soon other devotees began reverently splashing handfuls of water onto Prabhupada's body. Standing almost up to his knees in water, the bright sunshine illuminating his golden-hued body, Prabhupada laughed as the devotees joined in.

The devotees realized that this pastime was just like an *abhiseka*, or bathing of the Deity, and when Guru-krpa Swami began to sing the prayers for bathing the Deity—*cintamani-prakara-sadmasu*—the other devotees joined in, singing and taking part in the *abhiseka* by the sea. Srila Prabhupada enjoyed it, sometimes putting his head forward to indicate that he wanted water poured on his head, then closing his eyes as the devotees poured the water. When Prabhupada lost his balance for a moment, Hari-sauri grabbed him. Prabhupada's feet had been sinking into the sand, and when he held one foot out it was muddy. As he wriggled his toes, a devotee poured water on the foot, washing it clean. Prabhupada then bent over, put ocean water in his mouth, and spat it out. Only Gurukrpa Swami was quick enough to catch some of the water and drink it.

As Prabhupada allowed the devotees to participate in bathing and gently massaging him, the devotees were carried away by ecstatic feelings. After about ten minutes, Prabhupada came out of the water, changed his clothes, and walked back to the hotel, where two devotees escorted him to a comfortable chair, sat him down, and carried him up to his room for his afternoon rest.

In the afternoon, Sevasiva Rath came again to see Prabhupada accompanied this time by another Puri *brahmana*. They gave Prabhupada some Jagannatha *prasadam* and sang the *Jagannath-astakam*. In silent appreciation Prabhupada listened as the *brahmanas* sang the famous prayer with each verse ending *jagannathah svami nayana-patha-gami bhavatu me*. ("O Lord of the universe, kindly be

visible unto me.”) When the two *brahmanas* finished singing, Prabhupada said, “So these European and American Vaisnavas, they are hankering after *jagannathah svami nayana-patha-gami bhavatu me*. Now it is through your intervention that they may be able to see Jagannatha Svami. They are hankering like that—*jagannathah svami nayana-patha-gami*.”

Sevasiva Rath again expressed his sympathy about the devotees’ not entering Jagannatha’s temple. He also told Prabhupada more about the book he had published, a compilation of select verses from Jagannatha dasa’s translation of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* into Oriya. Sevasiva had also written some commentary, and his book was to be inaugurated at a function that evening. Prabhupada again promised to attend and address Puri’s *brahmanas* and religionists.

— That evening, Srila Prabhupada was guest of honor at the outdoor *pandal* on the beach, and his disciples accompanied him to the stage with a rousing *kirtana*. Prabhupada took his seat. After the *kirtana* ended, one of the managers of the Jagannatha temple came forward and garlanded Srila Prabhupada. Sevasiva then announced, “We thank A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who has been kind enough to grace this occasion wherein we have assembled this evening to pay our respectful homage to His Holiness Jagannatha dasa Gosvami, who was a contemporary of Lord Caitanya.” Suddenly, about five *brahmanas* sitting on a platform rose and walked off the stage to join a *kirtana* party in front of an altar in a nearby field. It seemed strange to the devotees that these men had to leave just when Srila Prabhupada was going to speak.

“I thank you very much,” Srila Prabhupada began, but then the sound system failed. Srila Prabhupada paused, while one of his own disciples, an electrician, corrected the problem. Srila Prabhupada resumed speaking, his voice amplified above the distraction of the nearby *kirtanas*.

— “So in our humble way,” Prabhupada was saying, “we are trying to introduce Jagannatha Svami’s culture. *Jagannatha svami nayana-patha-gami bhavatu me*.” Sevasiva had invited Prabhupada explicitly to speak about his new book, and Prabhupada had already mentioned privately to his disciples that these people were inviting him to serve their own purpose. But now Prabhupada took the occasion to speak about Lord Jagannatha, rather than about the Oriyan Jagannatha dasa. He had a special message in mind.

— “You will be very much pleased to know,” he continued, “that in the year 1967 I introduced Ratha-yatra in San Francisco, and it has

been going on continually for the last nine or ten years. And the government, they have fixed up a holiday for Ratha-yatra. We have the twentieth of July as a government-fixed-up holiday for Ratha-yatra. And people take part in the Ratha-yatra. Not only my devotees, but even outsiders. Ten to twelve thousand people attend, and we distribute *prasadam* to all of them. They feel very much obliged. And the newspaper writes that people in general never felt such ecstasy as they are feeling in the Ratha-yatra festival. The police say that the crowds in the Western countries, as soon as there is a big crowd, they create disturbance. But the police were surprised that this crowd is not a window-breaking crowd.

"Next we introduced Ratha-yatra in London. And in London, Trafalgar Square—it is the most famous square within the city—there is a big column called Nelson's Column. Our *ratha* was so high that *The Guardian* newspaper criticized this Ratha-yatra as a rival to Nelson's Column. Next we introduced Ratha-yatra in Philadelphia. And last year we introduced Ratha-yatra in New York. And we also have Ratha-yatras in Melbourne and Sydney and in Paris.

"So in the Western countries Ratha-yatra is being introduced one after another, and Jagannatha Svami is attracting the attention of the Western people." Suddenly some of the men on the stage began talking loudly among themselves in Oriya. Prabhupada stopped, turned, and said, "What is that?" The talking subsided, and he continued.

"So people will come in your Jagannatha Puri now from all parts of the world. That is beneficial from various points of view. From the point of view of the tourist program, the government will benefit. When people are attracted to see Jagannatha Puri, Jagannatha Svami, that is good. But unfortunately you do not allow these foreigners to enter the temple. How it can be adjusted? This stumbling block should be dissolved, that you want Jagannatha Svami to be compact within your home and you do not expand the mercy of Jagannatha.

"He is *Jagannatha*! He is not only just Purinatha or Oriyanatha. He is Jagannatha. Krsna declares in the *Bhagavad-gita*, *bhoktaram yajna-tapasam sarva-loka-mahesvaram*. That is the definition of *jagannatha*—*sarva-loka-mahesvaram*. So why you should deny the inhabitants of *sarva-loka* the *darsana* of Jagannatha? Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu never approved such things. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said *prthivite aḥe yata nagaradi grama/sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama*. When the thing is being done and when they are eager to come

here, why you should restrain? What is the cause? This is not very good."

Srila Prabhupada continued to argue that foreigners who had taken to Vaisnavism should be allowed to enter the temple of Lord Jagannatha. Offenses to the Vaisnavas, he said, were condemned by Lord Caitanya. Therefore, Prabhupada declared, he had come to Puri specifically to request the leaders to remove this offensive restriction and be friendly to the foreign devotees. He invited Puri's leaders to come and see the Jagannatha and Radha-Kṛṣṇa temples all over the world and see how the foreigners had actually become pure Vaisnavas, strictly avoiding sinful life. "No illicit sex, no meat-eating, no fish-eating, no egg-eating, no intoxication, no gambling," said Prabhupada.

"Why you should not receive them as Vaisnava and give them proper reception? That is my request. I hope there are many learned scholars and devotees present here. They should endeavor to remove this restriction of shortsightedness, and let us combinedly work with Jagannatha to preach the *bhakti* cult for the benefit of the whole world."

As Prabhupada finished his lecture, Hari-sauri leaned forward and asked Prabhupada if he wanted to answer questions. But Sevasiva came quickly to Prabhupada's side and said, "No, don't put their questions." Sevasiva picked up the small paperback volume which was supposed to have been the topic of the evening's presentation. "The *Bhagavata* of Jagannatha," said Sevasiva, and he handed it to Srila Prabhupada, requesting him to now speak, as expected, about the merit of the book and its inauguration. Srila Prabhupada looked indifferently at the small book in his hand. Speaking over the microphone he said, "So what shall I do? Of course, I do not know the Oriya language, but it is said that it is *Bhagavata* of Jagannatha. So it is inaugurated." Prabhupada placed the book down and stood up to leave. The audience applauded.

Srila Prabhupada then walked off across the sands in the dark, followed by his disciples, and entered a nearby Gaudiya Math temple, where the devotees held *kirtana*. They then went to another Gaudiya Math temple, Purusottama Math, and again held *kirtana*.

During the chanting at Purusottama Math, Prabhupada sat in a chair. When he was ready to leave, he began to stand, using his cane as a support, but suddenly, as he was about halfway up, he dropped down again onto the chair. Hari-sauri had to lift him to his feet by holding him under the arms. Prabhupada said nothing, but walked

slowly out of the hall and got into the car. Not everyone had noticed Prabhupada's momentary collapse, but Hari-sauri, on returning to his room, anxiously wrote of it in a letter to a Godbrother as "yet another sign that Srila Prabhupada's health is very quickly dwindling away." Certainly none of the Puri *panditas* had noticed any dwindling from Srila Prabhupada's presentation on behalf of Lord Jagannatha, Lord of the universe.

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Proper names in *A Visit to Jagannath Puri* appear as they did in the original journal, except in the extracts, which contain the spellings found in *Sri Caitanya-caritamrita*.

