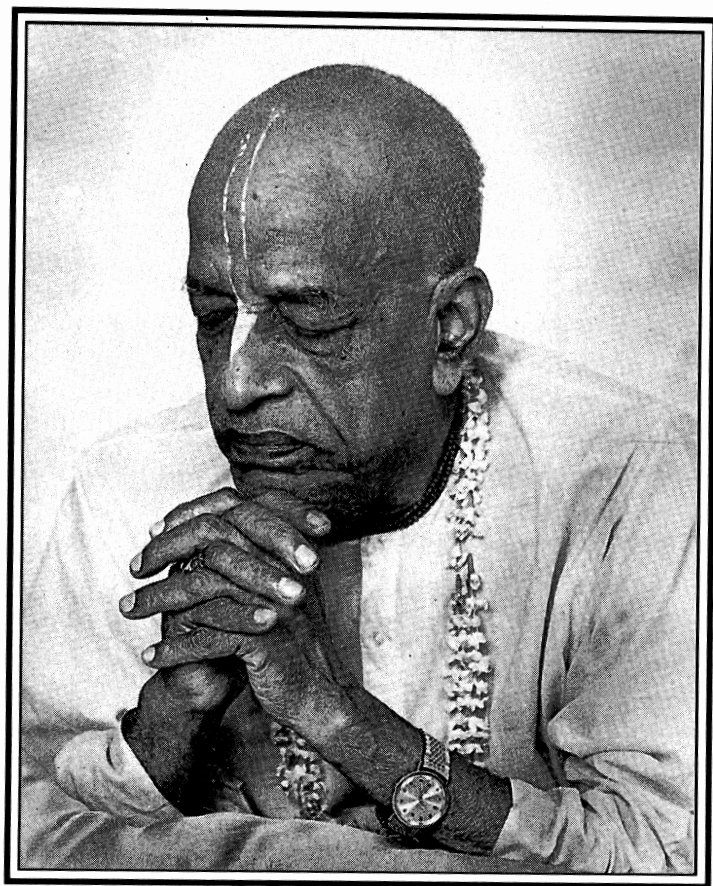


LIFE WITH THE PERFECT MASTER

A Personal Servant's Account



SATSVARUPA DASA GOSWAMI

LIFE WITH THE PERFECT MASTER

A Personal Servant's Account

The Pastimes and Teachings

of

His Divine Grace

A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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A Personal Servant's Account

SATSVARUPA DASA GOSWAMI

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INTRODUCTION

I HAVE A PERSONAL story to tell. It is about a time (January – July 1974) I spent as a personal servant and secretary of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Although I have written extensively about Śrīla Prabhupāda, I've hesitated to give this account, for fear it would expose me as a poor disciple. But now I'm going ahead, confident that the truth will purify both my readers and myself. I hope that as I write I will reach a deeper, clearer understanding of my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I trust I will find lessons and realizations worth sharing.

I hope to avoid a "more fortunate than thou" attitude as I tell my story, since a Vaiṣṇava should not try to project an image of himself as a unique, favored disciple. In the name of glorifying Śrīla Prabhupāda one should not think of himself as glorious and pure and conclude that that is why Śrīla Prabhupāda gave him attention and personal association. Śrīla Prabhupāda was equal to all. Of course, whoever personally associated with him was certainly very fortunate—but that fortune was the causeless mercy of the pure devotee. Accounts of life with Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, should be told in a sincere attempt to share one's good fortune with others—to grant the hearers a further, intimate entrance into Śrīla Prabhupāda's wonderful life—not to gain credit for oneself. Most of what I have read or heard of my Godbrothers' accounts of life with Śrīla Prabhupāda have been humble and sincere presentations, and I hope to follow that path.

I am writing ten years after the events took place. Using diaries that I kept at the time, I am trying to recreate a life as it actually happened—when Śrīla Prabhupāda gave his association to a foolish devotee, taking him as his personal servant.

ONE

December 1973

With a small group of men, all *brahmacārī* disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I had come to San Antonio, Texas, planning to stay there for the month of December. We went out chanting daily, standing in a park across the street from the Alamo, playing a *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas* and singing the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Curious people came and went, and we would offer them *Back to Godhead* magazines. One day, less than a week after we had arrived in town, we returned to our rented, phoneless apartment to discover a telegram: "CALL LOS ANGELES. KARANDHARA."

Karandhara dāsa was the ISKCON zonal secretary for the Western United States, and as Śrīla Prabhupāda was staying in Los Angeles at the time, I regarded the telegram as highly important. Walking to a nearby pay telephone booth, I reached Karandhara long distance and received one of the most extraordinary phone messages I ever heard in my life.

"Prabhupāda wants you to come here and be his permanent traveling secretary and servant," said Karandhara.

"What? How come?" I could hardly believe or understand my good fortune. But it wasn't clear. Why would he call me?

Karandhara explained briefly that Śrīla Prabhupāda's present servant, Śrutakīrti, was going to get married and could no longer travel throughout the world accompanying Śrīla Prabhupāda. They had been thinking for the past few days who would become Śrīla Prabhupāda's new servant, and Śrīla Prabhupāda himself had suggested that I would be good for the job since I could type and work on editing as Śrīla Prabhupāda produced his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* translations and purports.

Karandhara and I exchanged sincere exclamations that this was a great mercy on me by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Then he asked me how soon I could come.

"I can come right away," I replied, although I hadn't yet figured out what to do about the men and location in San Antonio.

"Well, you don't have to break your neck to get here in one day or anything," Karandhara said soberly. If within a few days I could wind up my present program, tend to any other affairs I had in the management of the Midwest G.B.C. zone, and then come to Los Angeles, that would be good enough.

Very rarely had things happened to me with such unexpected, great sudden fortune. I left that phone booth in San Antonio feeling as if the greatest benediction had just descended upon me—the most wonderful thing imaginable for a young *sannyāsī* disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda—our spiritual master, the world *ācārya*, had been thinking of me to become his servant—a wonderful dream come true!

I returned to the men, who were expectant.

"What did Karandhara want?" asked Mahābuddhi.

I couldn't hide my excitement and blurted it out. Their first response was spontaneous congratulations and appreciation. To them it also seemed like a topmost blessing on their Godbrother. But then they questioned what would happen to them. We discussed it, and I asked them to stay in San Antonio for the time being. Hṛdayānanda Goswami, who was a great favorite of mine and theirs was in Los Angeles and maybe he would agree to come to Texas and take leadership of the party. For myself, I felt I had to leave at once.

As I left, Ghanaśyāma dāsa said, "To get this call from Śrīla Prabhupāda you must be a very special advanced devotee." But I felt that what he said wasn't true and that he was exaggerating and over-estimating. Everyone of us was serving Śrīla Prabhupāda, wherever we were, and the duty of going to be with Śrīla Prabhupāda was also service in the same way.

I had misgivings in leaving my small party of dedicated men and my life of traveling and preaching with them—but I also felt a growing excitement and attachment to the new call to duty as personal

servant. It seemed to me a fulfillment of all my hopes for a personal relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I had been with Śrīla Prabhupāda in the first days of my spiritual life, when Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to begin his mission in New York City in 1966. But since then, ISKCON had grown into a world-wide institution, and Śrīla Prabhupāda had been constantly traveling and dealing with hundreds of disciples. He had become less available for personal association, and one had to follow his order in separation: I had always relished the memory of my days with him in 1966 as my greatest fortune, but now he was giving me another opportunity to revive the contact with his personal, physical presence. It was nothing less than the most desirable, most coveted award—and it was being handed to me with no direct effort on my part.

* * *

"I must be in *māyā*," Śrutakīrti laughed, "to give up being Śrīla Prabhupāda's servant in order to get married." Prabhupāda had assured him, he said, that he could rejoin him as servant in the future: he could stay with his wife for six months, and then go and travel with Śrīla Prabhupāda for six months, and in this way divide his time.

Śrutakīrti was very friendly in showing me the servant's tasks, and I wrote down details, such as when to enter Śrīla Prabhupāda's room in the morning to bring his medicine and tooth-brush twig, when to be ready to accompany him on his morning walk, what to prepare for his breakfast, when and how to prepare for the morning massage, and how to cook his lunch.

I didn't know how to cook. Śrutakīrti was expert in preparing half a dozen dishes in less than an hour in Śrīla Prabhupāda's multi-level brass cooker. He said I could try to learn by watching him. But he admitted it was tricky; it would take time.

Śrutakīrti advised me, "Whenever you go into Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, try to do as many things as possible. Don't be constantly

going in and out for little things. I always think, 'Why should Prabhupāda have to see a horrible creature like me?' So I try not to go before him unnecessarily." This advice revealed his humble, reverent attitude toward Śrīla Prabhupāda, which I also hoped to maintain. I was being brought close to Śrīla Prabhupāda not for my spiritual sense gratification but to perform service.

Most of the duties were menial—valet and secretarial tasks—but as I sat on the floor in the tiny servant's quarters, down the hall from Śrīla Prabhupāda's suite of rooms in the L.A. temple, I was excited, ready, and anxious to learn how to be a good servant.

It wasn't to be my first time with Śrīla Prabhupāda. In fact, less than a month previously, I had come with my group of *brahmacārīs* to see Śrīla Prabhupāda in Los Angeles. But now I was coming to be his constant companion. I began imagining what it would be like. Śrīla Prabhupāda would greet me in his room, briefly welcoming me to my new service. Sitting at his low desk, resting against the cushions, he would smile majestically, yet kindly—my true father. I would hear him dictating *Bhāgavatam* very early in the morning; I would accompany him on his morning walk, keeping beside and slightly behind him as he discoursed spontaneously. And in the car and at the temple, I would be close by his side, ready to tend to his every need. Some things I couldn't even imagine: how I would massage him while he sat in the late morning sunlight, how I would manage to cook his lunch and bring it before him. But I knew I would worship him in every circumstance, because he was already established in my heart as lord and master of all my activities, as my eternal spiritual master. I would live just to await the ringing of his hand-bell, so that I could rush into his presence, touch my head to the floor in obeisances, and look up to see him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sat on a straw mat in his garden—a small patch of green lawn with a profusion of flowers and surrounded by a

high cinder-block wall. Śrutakīrti was massaging him, and I sat nearby watching. Śrīla Prabhupāda was relaxed, wearing only a *gamchā* wrapped around his waist. He sometimes glanced at different flowers. I had watched this pleasant, transcendental scene before, but this time I was nervous because I was supposed to learn how to do it. Śrīla Prabhupāda's smooth skin moved under Śrutakīrti's strong, expert hands.

Prabhupāda looked my way and said, "Are you going to give the massage?"

"Yes," I replied, "but Śrutakīrti advised that today I was to watch and learn."

Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled mildly and said, "That is like learning to swim from the land." All three of us laughed, but I suddenly realized, *I am going to have to get into all of this service right away.*

At the next morning massage I was alone with Śrīla Prabhupāda. As soon as I began he said, "Harder," and it took all my strength and stamina to keep going for about forty minutes, massaging his head, then his back, his chest, then his arms, hands, legs, and feet. When I finished he held out his right hand and I poured a little mustard seed oil which he took and applied within his nostrils. Massaging Prabhupāda was like a new initiation. From my side, it was a completely spiritual, ecstatic exchange, the essence of the personal servant's worship of the spiritual master. From Śrīla Prabhupāda's side, he seemed to find me a passable worker. In the beginning, however, I approached these tasks with a fear I would fail the test and Śrīla Prabhupāda would throw me out as his servant.

That evening he called me in along with his Sanskrit editor-disciple Paṇḍitji, and it was then I learned the especially sweet service of massaging Prabhupāda's legs while he lay in bed just before taking his evening's rest. The lights were turned off and while Paṇḍitji massaged one leg I massaged the other. With gentle squeezing we pressed on Prabhupāda's legs and feet. I felt awkward and ashamed to be allowed to come close to Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee, but I also had a blissful family sensation; I was his spiritual son, along

with one of my brothers, attending to our spiritual father.

Cooking was a harder test. I had to cook rice, *dāl*, and vegetables at the same time in different compartments of the triple-boiler. Furthermore, I had to turn on the flame just before going to massage Śrīla Prabhupāda, and when I returned after the massage—presto!—everything was supposed to be perfectly cooked.

I would cut up all the vegetables at about 11 A.M. and put them into the boiler along with rice and *dāl*. The *dāl* (spilt-pea or mung) went in the bottom pot along with water and spices. Cut vegetables went into pot number two. And in the top pot I placed a double-decker tin, with rice and water on the bottom and zucchini slices on top.

The first few days in Los Angeles, Śrīla Prabhupāda came into the small room where I worked and stood beside me, showing me how to cook. He demonstrated the proper texture for *capātī* dough, making it as soft as possible. It didn't matter if the dough was wet, he said, because you could add flour to each patty while they were being rolled. Prabhupāda also showed me how to spice and how to make an instant version of sweetrice.

Each day when the massage was over I would dash back to the boiler. My biggest problem was the rice. Being in the top pot it cooked slower than the *dāl* and vegetables, and I would have to make a frenzied attempt to finish it. In that brief fifteen to twenty minutes between massage and lunch—while Śrīla Prabhupāda bathed, dressed, put on *tilaka*, and recited his *gāyatrī mantra*—I also had to cook the *capātīs*. After his *gāyatrī*, Prabhupāda would ring his bell and that was it; I had to bring his lunch without a minute's delay. Śrutakīrti was around to give me some tips, but for a few days Śrīla Prabhupāda tolerated a less-than-average lunch.

I have never experienced such combined anxiety, anticipation and breathless pleasure as I did in preparing Śrīla Prabhupāda's lunch, serving it to him, standing by to see what he would say, and running back and forth to bring hot *capātīs*. The kitchen area in the servant's quarters was disarrayed, full of pots and covered with flour. My mind and senses were completely tense and ready

to jump at Prabhupāda's command.

Sometimes Paṇḍitji would come in and help me prepare the *capātis* while Prabhupāda was eating. Prabhupāda liked them round, thin, and biggish. After rolling one on a floured surface, I would pick it up, pat off the flour and put it in a frying pan on medium heat. When the *capātī* stiffened slightly, with air bubbles appearing on its surface, I would flip it over, briefly cook the other side, then remove it from the frying pan with tongs and hold it over a low flame. When it puffed up, I took it off the flame and buttered one side. Each operation had to be done just right.

As Paṇḍitji and I took turns running *capātis* into Prabhupāda, he would often make comments. If the *capātis* or other dishes were not cooked to his satisfaction, he would say something sarcastic like, "It's half-cooked," or "It's burnt." Or if something was all right, he would be pleased and say so. Sometimes I made something I thought was bad, but Prabhupāda would like it, or just the opposite. Sometimes he would seem very easy-going and kind no matter what I cooked, and sometimes he would become angry as if my poor cooking were a great calamity. There was no way to take it but to surrender to whatever he did.

One of the first times I cooked lunch, several of the preparations didn't come out at all well. I brought the lunch in with great trepidation. But just at that moment, a devotee from the temple arrived with some *samosās* that Śrutakīrti's wife had made at her apartment. Prabhupāda ate them all deliciously, and the day was saved.

Whenever Prabhupāda ate, I would simply hang on his every word or gesture to see whether he appreciated what I had done. It was no casual matter to wonder and anticipate, "How does he like it?" I was so tensed up I was ready to cry or laugh. If he said a *capātī* was not cooked, I would run back and try to make the next one come out right. I would be sometimes panting in a breathless state, sweating and nervous. Only a devotee of Prabhupāda could appreciate that all these symptoms were transcendental. It was no ordinary exchange, because Śrīla

Prabhupāda was no ordinary master but a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

After his lunch, Prabhupāda would rest for about an hour, and I would clean my room and go downstairs to wash his silver dishes and cups. I could have engaged someone to help me, but I thought I should do it all myself. Washing dishes in the main kitchen of the temple, I would converse with other devotees in a sociable way, but I was in a world of my own. I worked quickly, intent and always hurrying, and I ran back upstairs to the servant's room. I had no time for extended conversations, nor did I have time to talk about what Prabhupāda was doing. I felt I had too much to do, but I also refused to share any of the work. I didn't want to shirk my duties as a servant.

But I did have a rather impossible schedule and workload. Prabhupāda usually assigned the duties of secretary and servant to two men. But I was both secretary and servant. In addition to tending his personal needs, I read him his mail, took dictation as he replied to each letter, and typed his return letters. Paṇḍitji would only perform his duty as Sanskrit editor for Prabhupāda's *Bhāgavatam* translations. He otherwise made himself scarce or refused to do anything asked of him.

I was also charged with typing Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhāgavatam* dictation and editing the English manuscript. And I was still the G.B.C. secretary of temples in the Mid-west. Whenever I found time, I would run down to the main office and speak on the phone to one of the temple presidents in my zone. In addition, I was also editor-in-chief of *Back to Godhead* magazine and had to read incoming manuscripts and try to write articles myself. It was all a bit too much.

Prabhupāda observed me running here and there trying to organize my program while sometimes forgetting things, and he chided me in a loving, instructive way. He noticed that I had burned a ring on the floor of my room by placing a hot pot there, and he made a brief remark. Once on Ekādaśī I brought him his medicine mixed with rice water, even though he had told me previously not to bring the medicine on Ekādaśī because we fast

from all grains on that day. One day, seeing one of my discrepancies, he told me a story about Sir Isaac Newton. He said Sir Isaac Newton's friend had made two holes in his door and a friend asked what they were for. "These holes," said Sir Isaac, "are for my two cats so they can pass in and out of the room." Sir Isaac Newton's friend asked, "Why make two holes? Why can't the cats just go out of one hole?" The learned scientist replied, "I have made them in two sizes because one of my cats is small and one is big." On hearing this, Sir Isaac's friend laughed at the foolishness. Obviously, both cats could have gone, one at a time, through a single large-sized hole. It was double work unthinkingly done.

I think Prabhupāda told me this story to point out that I was like an absent-minded professor. At first I flattered myself that at least it was a very learned man, Sir Isaac Newton, who had done something foolish. Perhaps Sir Isaac had been thinking of higher things and not attending to ordinary details. But this couldn't apply to me, because all my "ordinary details" were important phases of personal service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Thinking over the Isaac Newton story, I further concluded that while Prabhupāda saw I was well-intentioned and hard-working, I was sometimes impractical. For example, there was no good reason not to ask some of the temple devotees to assist me.

One morning, while accompanying Śrīla Prabhupāda on his morning walk, I made another absent-minded mistake. We had driven to Venice beach with a few devotees and parked the car. As we started to walk, I suddenly said, "Oops!" and turned back to the car to get my chanting beads. I tried to open the doors, but they were locked.

"What is that?" Prabhupāda asked.

I replied, "I left my beads in the car."

"Sir Isaac Newton," Prabhupāda commented and started off on his walk without me. The reference to my foolishness, spoken in an almost private language, both mortified and delighted me.

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During this time in Los Angeles I received my most severe chastisement from His Divine Grace. He rang his bell one afternoon, and I entered while he was sitting talking with Śrutakīrti. I offered obeisances, touching my head to the floor, and then sat on the floor facing him. His room, with its light blue walls, burnt-orange curtains, and low desk, had a pleasant atmosphere. And it was always exciting and awe-inspiring to be with Prabhupāda.

In a matter-of-fact way, Prabhupāda asked me about a letter he had dictated to Guru dāsa, which I had subsequently typed and mailed to New Delhi. He wanted to know if I had remembered to enclose a carbon copy of his previous letter, which Guru dāsa had never received. I thought a moment and then told the truth, "No, I didn't." I was surprised Prabhupāda was thinking of such an obscure detail. It seemed amazing that he should all of a sudden refer to this. And by his remembering he had caught me in a mistake. Prabhupāda looked seriously concerned. "I wrote in that letter," he said, "that a copy of the previous letter was enclosed. Why did you send out a letter by me saying a letter was enclosed, but with no letter actually enclosed?" I shook my head, showing that I agreed it was wrong.

"That is childish," said Prabhupāda, "It makes no sense."

"I couldn't find the copy in the files," I said defensively. That was a fact; it wasn't in the files kept by the previous secretary, or at least I hadn't been able to find it. I glanced over at Śrutakīrti and then back to Śrīla Prabhupāda. How far was this going to go? I became more apprehensive. I could sense it wasn't over yet by any means.

"This will be a reflection on me," Śrīla Prabhupāda persisted, "that I sent such a childish letter saying something was enclosed but nothing was enclosed." Śrīla Prabhupāda was demanding something more from me. I was aware that he was instructing me on a deeper level, in a basic lesson, but the whole thing was becoming hard to bear. It was hard to see him displeased with me—he whom I lived to please and worship. And it was hard to admit I was wrong.

"I forgot," I mumbled. But Prabhupāda wasn't satisfied. It was as if he couldn't even believe that I had been so careless.

"Why did you do it?" he asked sharply. "How could such a letter be sent?"

At these words my eyes began to water and my insides quaked. By this one mistake he was exposing my inadequate devotional attitude and my lack of surrender. Like a sudden rain, tears began to pour down my cheeks. I took out a handkerchief and blew my nose. I wiped the tears, but they kept coming. Śrīla Prabhupāda, unmoved by this wet, emotional display, remained transcendently angry, sticking to his point.

All right, I thought, let me give the honest explanation. Let me confess.

"I left the letter out," I said with a choked voice, "because I did not take seriously the duty you have given me. That must be the reason. I am simply not taking these instructions seriously. I am not taking the relationship seriously, therefore I made such a mistake."

My negative confession did not pacify him. But now Prabhupāda looked at me differently. His eyes were full of feeling and disappointment. This pushed me to an even more distressed state. I was no longer merely sitting in a room with light-blue walls having an official talk with my official spiritual master—I was desperately fighting to keep alive in spiritual life. His sincere disappointment in me was the last thing I wanted. *Why do I say that I don't take his instructions seriously?* I asked myself. *Śrīla Prabhupāda is everything to me!* When it dawned on me that Śrīla Prabhupāda was not going to let me go just by my crying or admitting my fault, I fought with my wits in a practical attempt to figure *what to do*. What I needed was a plan to rectify the wrong.

"What I'll have to do," I said, "is send Guru dāsa another letter that I will write myself." Now I could sense that my brain was working in the way Prabhupāda desired. "I'll apologize that I had left out the enclosure you wanted me to send to him."

"Do it," said Prabhupāda, and I was at once dismissed.

After that scene, Prabhupāda maintained no grudge at all, and never referred to the incident again, even when I next saw him. I had learned several lessons. One was to not take my service lightly but to attend to all details with gravity. I also saw that I could not play games with Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, because They would eventually know what I was doing. I had also learned, through the suffering of reprimand, that whenever I made a mistake I should neither defend myself nor uselessly lament but find a practical means of correction.

"It's fitting," said one of the G.B.C. men visiting Los Angeles, "that Śrīla Prabhupāda have a *sannyāsī* as his servant."

"You are like a Govinda, the faithful, constant servant of Lord Caitanya," said another devotee.

They encouraged me that this was my "eternal" service.

"Well, I certainly want to do it eternally," I said.

I felt that being Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal servant was a great privilege. Coming out of the temple to go for his morning walk, Śrīla Prabhupāda was always accompanied by his servant. As he walked towards the luxurious car, almost the whole community of men and women devotees gathered in front of the temple to see and greet him. "Everyone can see I am Prabhupāda's new servant," I thought. The real thrill, however, was not that my peers could see me, but that Prabhupāda now allowed me to always be close to him.

For his morning walks, Prabhupāda went, on alternate mornings, to Venice Beach and the Cheviot Hills golf course. His Ph.D. disciple Svarūpa Dāmodara would play the role of a challenging scientist, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would destroy the atheistic theories with devastating logic. Another disciple, Prajāpati, had studied at a Christian seminary, and Prabhupāda would call to him, "Where is the theologian?" Prajāpati would tell Prabhupāda some of the latest wild speculations of well-known theologians, and Prabhupāda

would expose their foolishness while asserting the universal principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I took no particular role, but was mostly silent and very happy to be there. For me it was easier to be attentive while walking in the morning with Śrīla Prabhupāda than it was sitting down in the temple during a lecture. If I did speak up on the walks, it was often to raise a doubt.

One morning Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "In the *Upaniṣads* it says that the sun is God's eye. Unless God sees, you cannot see." As he spoke, the sun rose blazing on the horizon. "What does the atheist say about this?"

I suddenly felt duty-bound to give the atheist's version. "The atheist doesn't believe the sun is God's eye," I said, "because he cannot see the person whose eye it is supposed to be."

Prabhupāda replied, "So, sometimes you see a cat's eye, but don't see the cat. So by this process you can see Kṛṣṇa in everything—the universal form." His answer stopped me, but after a pause I spoke again.

"They don't like that you have to surrender first and then learn."

"Well, that is the process in any field," Prabhupāda replied, "You have to accept authority in order to learn."

I tried to remember Śrutakīrti's advice not to impose myself upon Prabhupāda, but there were many occasions when Prabhupāda seemed to welcome philosophical discourse. He even said that a disciple should make praises of the spiritual master when he comes before him. I was unfortunately slow to make such praise, but it was more natural for me to make a philosophical inquiry, which I also saw as a way to glorify Śrīla Prabhupāda.

In the back seat of the car, while returning from the morning walk, I asked, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, can we go back to Godhead in this life?"

"Yes, why not?" Prabhupāda replied, glancing my way. He held his cane at an angle so it rested on the floor of the car. Everything about Prabhupāda was purely Kṛṣṇa conscious, but it seemed especially so when he was speaking.

"But one has to be free of all material desires," I said.

"Kṛṣṇa consciousness means no more material desires," Prabhupāda answered.

"If someone asked me if he could go back to Godhead in one life," I pursued, "I would say yes. But if he asked me whether I was going back to Godhead, I don't know if I could definitely say yes." Prabhupāda recognized the problem, and as master preacher, he immediately gave his advice.

"No," he said. "It is not a question whether I go or you go, but if anyone takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness he will go back to Godhead. Kṛṣṇa says. Of course, if we are preaching, it is not that we are exporting them by consignment back to Godhead and we are not going." Prabhupāda laughed. "It is expected," he said, "that the preacher is going also. Just like with our books, our students are very expert at selling them but not at reading them. That is not very good. They should read the books also."

It occurred to me that of all the special privileges afforded the servant, these extra opportunities to inquire from Śrīla Prabhupāda would have the most lasting and significant benefit.

Two weeks went by, and I began to learn the daily routine. My cooking became acceptable, and my Isaac Newton tendencies came more under my control. Along with Śrīla Prabhupāda I began to look forward to his up-coming tour that would take us to Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, and to India. One of the devotees who worked at the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust gave me a camera and asked that I take pictures of Śrīla Prabhupāda wherever we went. At my request, they also gave me a new portable typewriter. The manager of Prabhupāda's tape ministry gave me charge of a heavy Uher tape recorder and showed me how to use it to record Prabhupāda's lectures and talks. So I was well-equipped for world travel as the secretary-servant. All I needed was faith and devotion—the kind that could overcome obstacles—and I hoped to gain that by staying with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

TWO

Carrying our Pan Am round-the-world tickets, Śrīla Prabhupāda, Paṇḍitji, and I boarded the flight in Los Angeles. It was my first plane ride with Śrīla Prabhupāda, who was by now a seasoned world traveler. As the plane took off over the ocean Śrīla Prabhupāda sat back tolerantly, strapped into his seat and peacefully chanting *japa*. He was almost eighty years old and yet despite inconvenience he refused to stay put in his comfortable Los Angeles garden suite. Prabhupāda knew he had to travel to each ISKCON center to keep his disciples in an inspired state for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was personally spreading his movement and teachings. I thought how he had been preaching to us in Los Angeles that we should "not sleep" but always "make propaganda." He wanted devotees everywhere to hear these things and see it personified in him. He had said we should never do anything without thinking, "Am I eating this for Kṛṣṇa? Am I speaking for Kṛṣṇa? Time is so precious." Even though his disciples had his books, they had to hear from him personally, and therefore he traveled.

We had packed a meal for Śrīla Prabhupāda—*sabjīs*, *samosās* and sweets—and we served it to him in flight. The stewardesses came by smiling and said we seemed to have a better lunch than they were offering. In their ignorance of Prabhupāda they offered us liquor. Prabhupāda accepted a 7-UP and invited us to take them also. I carefully arranged everything on his plate upon the airplane tray and sat by offering him more of each preparation as he ate. Upon finishing, he said that we should now eat also. It was awkward to sit on the same level as Prabhupāda and eat, but on the crowded plane there was no alternative, and Prabhupāda expected it.

Now we were no longer in an ISKCON temple with dozens of devotees surrounding Śrīla Prabhupāda and helping us meet

his desires. It was just me and Paṇḍitji, surrounded by nondevotees who had little interest in Śrīla Prabhupāda. I felt protective of him, although he was actually protecting all of us. Still, it was my duty to think and act that way on behalf of all the devotees in the world. The plane was already uncomfortable for Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I wanted to make it less so, forgetting my own comforts. At least I wanted to assure Prabhupāda that I was ready, willing, and able to serve him.

In flight the airline showed "Dillinger," a movie about the life of the infamous bank robber-killer. Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't use the earphones, but he began to watch the full-color film, which was filled with realistic gunfights. I also watched, sitting beside him, and at one point he said to me, "It is just like real life." In one scene the plainclothes policemen raided a mobster's apartment. They broke down the door with their feet, found the mobster and his girl in bed, and fired machine guns over their heads, frightening them to raise their hands and surrender. Prabhupāda asked me whether the men breaking into the apartment were the bandits. I said, no, these were actually the police. He made a few comments, one time saying, "It is all simply violence and no purpose." Although at first he seemed interested in the phenomenon and techniques of the lifelike film-illusion, after about a half-hour he seemed disgusted with it and stopped looking. For me it was a treat to see how he was curious, even as a *mahā-bhāgavata*, to see into the workings of Kṛṣṇa's material energy; it was a memorable delight to be with him in such an unusual situation and to see him completely Kṛṣṇa conscious, as usual, even while looking on briefly at "Dillinger."

The temple in Honolulu was small and crowded, and so the devotees had arranged for Śrīla Prabhupāda to stay in a skyscraper hotel near the main downtown beach area. He didn't seem to mind, although the main lobby was filled with tourists and we had to ride up about twenty floors in the elevator. The apartment had

one large living room with an adjoining bedroom for Śrīla Prabhupāda's use. There was also a small dining room and kitchen that could be separated from the other rooms by a folding door, and Paṇḍitji and I stayed there. There wasn't much privacy for Prabhupāda; if we made any noise he would hear us. But he had a great view of the ocean and sky. There was no desk, so he sat on the couch and we placed his dictaphone and books on a low glass table in front of him. Whatever the nondevotees build and arrange, even if expensively done, is never ideal for use in pure devotional service, yet Śrīla Prabhupāda was always able to make do with whatever was provided. He had said all he really needed was a quiet, clean room, a little *prasādam*, and some opportunity to preach to people. He certainly wasn't interested in using the populated hotel beach, the pool, the nightclub, or the meat-and-liquor restaurant. Looking down to the beach far below, we could see the bathers and surfers. Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked that they were wasting their time—coming to Hawaii to jump like monkeys, although human life was intended for self-realization. But Prabhupāda liked the breezes and the sunshine.

The temple was almost an hour away and so we left the hotel before dawn, while the sky was still dark. Hawaiian singing and guitar music were piped into the elevator, and Sudāmā, the Honolulu temple president, remarked to Prabhupāda that Hawaiians were famous as melodic singers. Śrīla Prabhupāda acknowledged Sudāmā's remark but commented that Bengalis were also famous as melodic singers.

In the lobby American tourists—mostly elderly and carrying cameras, the men wearing Bermuda shorts and Hawaiian shirts—were moving about, getting taxis or walking to the beach. On the road, as far into the distance as the eye could see, a line of cars with headlights shining approached the city.

"This is the best part of the morning for spiritual life," Śrīla Prabhupāda said unhappily, "and they are all up for sense gratification and for going to work."

The sun had not yet risen when we reached Waikiki Beach for

Prabhupāda's walk, but there too, surfers and fishermen were already in the water. "They have gotten up so early just to kill the fish," Prabhupāda said. And, referring to the surfers, he remarked. "It is a suffering for them to enter the water so early, but for *this* they will do it."

About half a dozen devotees joined us in a park by the ocean, and we walked behind Prabhupāda, who went briskly, marking the ground with his varnished, bamboo-textured cane, holding his head high. The devotees had brought him a wonderful garland of freshly-picked magnolia and pikake flowers, and he accepted it around his neck with pleasure. He also seemed to enjoy the nice ocean breezes. His shiny saffron silk clothes looked very elegant on his body, and his thickly crocheted white scarf, which he had asked me for at the beginning of the walk, was draped loosely around his shoulders.

When one of the devotees mentioned that the government had cut all the coconuts from the tall palm trees out of fear that they might fall and hurt someone, Śrīla Prabhupāda scoffed that this was ridiculous. "In India," he said, "there are many coconut trees, and there is no instance of anyone being hit on the head. Kṛṣṇa knows when to drop the coconut so no one is underneath. This is a demoniac government, the tree loses its beauty when the fruits are taken off, just as a woman without children loses her beauty."

As other people out strolling approached us, Prabhupāda often greeted them by saying, "Good morning." After several greetings he stopped and asked us, "What is the meaning of saying 'Good morning'?"

"It is a kind of friendly exchange," I said.

"It is a way of wishing each other good," said Sudāmā.

"No," said Prabhupāda. "The real thing is that in England, it is rarely a sunny morning. So when finally there is sun, people say, 'Good morning.' Similarly, in the material world there is always darkness, and that dark cloud is the desire of the living entity to be master."

As the sky lightened, we saw distant mountains and a nearby skyline of tall hotel and apartment buildings. Many small fishing and tour boats were in the harbor, and directly overhead large jets, both arriving and departing, flew over the island.

"As man wonderfully manipulates the material elements to make airplanes," said Prabhupāda, "there must also be a Supreme Being who has made the material universe. A plane, for example, is not created accidentally or automatically. It is produced and piloted by man. Similarly, God creates and controls the material universe. But the atheists deny God by saying that nature works on its own. They have lost their intelligence."

Speaking for the opposition, I gave what I thought was a feasible argument.

"Prabhupāda, the atheists believe that *they* can control nature, and therefore there is no need for God. After all, they are able to fly their planes." I gestured to the 747 jet overhead as evidence of man's power to control.

"They have *some* control," Prabhupāda replied, "but *some* control means *no* control. They are unable to control death, birth, disease and old age. So what is the value of *some* control?"

The Honolulu ISKCON center was a medium-sized residential house in a crowded suburban neighborhood. The devotees were gathered outside the house, and they greeted Śrīla Prabhupāda with sincere, intense enthusiasm, singing, dancing, and placing flowers in his path. Sudāmā was an accomplished *kīrtana* singer, and with Śrīla Prabhupāda seated on a simple *vyāsāsana* in the temple room, Sudāmā led an amplified *kīrtana*, inducing the devotees to take part fully. The *kīrtana* was obviously pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and his pleasure in turn increased the devotees' enthusiasm. The devotees also performed the appropriate *guru-pūjā* and introduced Prabhupāda to their Deity worship of Gaura-Nitāi. All these activities were performed by mostly young men with

shaved heads, *śikhā*, *tilaka*, and robes, and by women wearing *sārīs* that covered their heads.

Many guests were also at the temple, mostly long-haired Americans, some wearing neckbeads and carrying *japa* beads in beadbags. It was my first time to Hawaii, but I had heard how there were large groups of devotees here who chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa without following the four rules and without living or working within ISKCON. In fact, it had been less than a year ago that the former temple president had run off, taking temple funds with him. And Hawaii was also the base of Ānandaji, the self-styled devotee and initiated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who had his own following and who lived apart from ISKCON and its mission, even while claiming to be a follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew all these Hawaiian intrigues far better than I. He did not get cheaply involved in controversies; but by his words and actions he made it clear to whoever would listen what his order was and who were his actual followers.

After the *Bhāgavatam* lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for questions. One of the long-haired boys asked, "Why do some people insist that spiritual life has to be something organized, like organized religion? Isn't the absolute spiritual nature different than that, different than following rules and running an organization? Do you have to be so organized?"

"Yes!" Prabhupāda answered loud and strong. "We have to be very organized! Very strict! We cannot deviate an inch!"

It was clear that Prabhupāda knew the heart of the Hawaiian controversy—and his answer was clear. "We have a mission to cultivate all over the world," he said. "We have to print and distribute books and open centers and train devotees, and we cannot do that unless we are very organized and efficient. If we are to conduct a mission to save the fallen souls, which is the desire of Lord Caitanya and the previous *ācāryas*, then we have to organize the *saṅkīrtana* movement very nicely. And we have to be strict devotees."

Another question came to him about advanced devotees, which seemed to allude to Ānandaji's position.

Prabhupāda replied, "Who is advanced? Actually to be a neophyte is all right. But don't pose yourself as a spiritual master. If you haven't passed through college, don't pose yourself, 'Now I am M.A.' One who is the most confidential servant of the spiritual master becomes qualified to be a spiritual master in the future. You have to be completely detached from sex life. It is not such an easy thing, spiritual life. Those who leave ISKCON and criticize, trying to gain personal prestige, rather than give prestige to their spiritual master, are not qualified to be spiritual masters themselves."

There were more questions, but I was suddenly approached by a devotee who said there was an emergency phone call for me from Rāmeśvara in Los Angeles. Leaving the room, I went to the temple office and heard from Rāmeśvara the shocking news that Karandhara, the G.B.C. for Western U.S., had left the post. He had been involved with a woman, and so thought he should resign. Rāmeśvara was in considerable anxiety and asked me to tell Śrīla Prabhupāda and find out what to do. We exchanged some reassuring words about staying under the protection of Śrīla Prabhupāda's order, and then I had to go since Śrīla Prabhupāda was getting ready to leave the temple. I promised I would approach Prabhupāda with the bad news and seek a solution.

I got into the small car with Śrīla Prabhupāda. The devotees wanted him to sit in the front and use the seat belt. It was one of those cars that keep ringing a bell until you put on the seat belt. The seat belt was to go over Prabhupāda's shoulder and around his waist, but it got tangled around his body and took several minutes to disengage. Prabhupāda finally rode off without it. Several devotees accompanied us in the car, a small station wagon, two men riding in the back where there were no seats. They were carrying fruits and other things for Prabhupāda's kitchen at the hotel.

Sudāmā also rode with us, holding several bottles of a liquid milk culture called keifer. He told Prabhupāda that the keifer was very good for the devotees' health, but Śrīla Prabhupāda said he

didn't want any. It was better he said, to use fresh boiled milk, or to make your own yogurt.

Going through a commercial section of Honolulu, Prabhupāda saw a sign and read it out loud, "Service is our business." We laughed, and he commented, "Yes, when the service is done with remuneration, that is material. When it is done voluntarily, out of love, that is spiritual." Riding in the back seat, I felt inspired to hear Prabhupāda's definition of pure devotional service, and joyful to be with him as we sped along in the tropical sunshine, back to our private hotel. I kept thinking of the news I had to break to him about Karandhara. It was exciting to bear confidential messages for the spiritual master, but not when they would disturb him.

Sudāmā began commenting how Śrīla Prabhupāda handled the questions so expertly after the class.

"One of these groups is agitating against ISKCON," Sudāmā said.

"Do not agitate back," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied. "Don't cause a strain."

"But they spoke to one girl who had moved into the temple," said Sudāmā, "and they took her with them."

"So many girls come and go," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Just chant, dance, read, preach, and think of Kṛṣṇa always. The secret of success is to serve the bona fide spiritual master and follow his instructions with sincerity. In material life one is proud he has cheated the government or another person. But in spiritual life one cannot cheat. That is very bad. It cannot be done."

Back in his room high above the ocean, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat on a chair before a circular white formica table, and we served him a breakfast of fresh pineapple, melon, coconut slices, macadamia and cashew nuts, and hot milk. He said the fruits here were much better than in India.

Soon after, I told him the painful news from Los Angeles. He was disappointed but didn't say very much. I didn't know whether I should give an opinion. I didn't want to be simply a dumb message

boy, but neither did I want to be presumptuous and give unasked-for advice. I wanted to help Śrīla Prabhupāda do what he thought best. But when he did not say anything, I remained silent. Then he spoke philosophically, stressing how strong the sex impulse was. "*Hṛdaya-granthi* means a knot in the heart is made by sex union," Prabhupāda said. "The lovers say, 'You are my life, you are my life,' but that is illusion. They are only after sex intercourse and for the time being say, 'You are my life.' Home, family and possessions are another knot on top of a knot."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's pure Kṛṣṇa conscious mind expanded from thoughts about the immediate falldown of a disciple to a consideration of all the living entities and their entanglement in sex.

"Except for Kṛṣṇa consciousness," said Prabhupāda, "everyone is in ignorance entangled in sense gratification. People come to Hawaii to have sense gratification. They are the same as animals. The knowledge of how to free the soul from material life is lacking in them. So read my books. What is already published is sufficient to make a man perfect. Chant, go and preach. We have enough variety that no one should deviate. Take *prasāda*, read all day. We have so many books."

At the time I was the only one in the room, but what Śrīla Prabhupāda had said was not just for me. He had published millions of books; his lectures were recorded, reproduced, and distributed all over the world; and even these words, spoken in the privacy of his room, with only his servant present, were intended for everyone. Although his books were intended for everyone and his lectures were arranged so that they could be heard by people everywhere, yet he could not resist his all-valuable talking even if only one servant was present. But especially for we who had come under his charge, and those who were responsible for helping him in his work with devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, especially for us his words were like the living *sāstra*, the basis for a sure and definitive policy for managing ISKCON temples and devotees.

"This organization," he said, speaking of ISKCON, "is not run by bylaws, meetings, or vouchers, but by following the instructions of the spiritual master with sincerity. Whatever success I have is due to that. To one with faith in the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa comes knowledge of the scripture. Without that faith and sincerity, bylaws are useless."

But Prabhupāda said that at least Karandhara had left in an honorable way without taking any money. He had had a falldown and so he had resigned. At least that was better than the ex-temple president in Hawaii who had gone off with money. Personally and managerially, the new problem was a disturbance, and Prabhupāda decided to talk no more about it for the time being. He indicated I should go do my work, and he rose from the sofa and walked to the large window facing the sky. He began chanting his beads, and I made a quick exit.

I returned to my duties on the other side of the partition. I was sure the typing would bother Śrīla Prabhupāda, but what could I do? He had only asked me *not* to type when he was resting. Paṇḍitji had left the apartment, probably to go down to the pool, or to sit somewhere in the sun with a Sanskrit book. Soon I would have to start getting ready for lunch. Prabhupāda wanted me to cook *lokī* squash, and he had asked me to show him the cut squash before I put it in the boiler. I wasn't sure which way to cut it, whether to peel off the outer skin or just cut it like a loaf of bread, with the skin on. Even in the midst of thoughts of my duties I could not help but feel rushes of satisfaction and wonder at my fortune to be serving Śrīla Prabhupāda so closely. But how could I get everything done in the little time at my disposal?

First I had to type up his most recent *Bhāgavatam* dictation. Then I had to edit what I had typed days ago and send it to the BBT in Los Angeles. But before I sent it, I had to get Paṇḍitji to edit the Sanskrit, and it was extremely difficult to get him to do even his assigned editing.

Then there were letters, both to read to Śrīla Prabhupāda and to type. And to avoid making another mistake like the one in Los Angeles, I wanted to spend time with the portable files. And I had to phone back Rāmeśvara, but Prabhupāda had not yet concluded what to do in that case. Deciding to first type the latest *Bhāgavatam* dictation I sat at the kitchen table and started off with a loud clatter. But after only a half-hour, it was time to read the mail to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was not in the big room but in the bedroom looking out the window. I entered, bowed at his feet, and asked if he wanted to hear the mail.

He sat on the couch and I on the floor with half a dozen letters, a steno pad, and a ballpoint pen. The first letter was from the G.B.C. in India, telling about preparations for the festival to take place the next month in Māyāpur. Prabhupāda wanted devotees from all over the world to gather in Māyāpur on Gaura-pūrṇimā day, the appearance day of Lord Caitanya, for the first truly international ISKCON festival. But the G.B.C. report was disappointing, stating difficulties in getting the living quarters ready for the expected several hundred devotees. And in Vṛndāvana, where the devotees were supposed to go after Māyāpur, there were difficulties in arranging enough *prasādam*. Annoyed, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that it was the duty of the G.B.C. to solve these problems. He dictated a letter with some practical advice, strongly urging the devotees to get everything done on time. "Concerning our Vrindaban project, along with the residential quarters, the remaining work of my quarters must be finished up immediately for my residence."

In another letter, also from India, a devotee holding a responsible post wrote to say he was thinking of resigning. Godbrothers were always slighting him and fighting with him, he said, and they even claimed that Śrīla Prabhupāda had a belittling attitude toward him—so he wanted to resign from his post and just do some simple, anonymous work. While hearing the part of the letter about how even Śrīla Prabhupāda belittled him, Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled compassionately. I could see that Prabhupāda loved the devotee,

even if maybe, as spiritual master, he did say something "belittling." But the "resignation" part of the letter drew fire from Śrīla Prabhupāda, who refused to consider it.

"Dedicate your life to Kṛṣṇa," he said, and I wrote it down in my steno book. "What is this resignation? How can you speak of resignation from a Kṛṣṇa conscious duty? Kṛṣṇa says, 'After many births one comes to the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa.' So how can you speak of resignation? You should think: It is my Father's business. I have to do it. Devotees who speak of resignation have not realized the importance of what we are doing."

It was time to prepare Prabhupāda's lunch. He was sitting outside on a narrow veranda in his *gamchā* awaiting his massage. First I brought out the cut-up *loki* squash for his inspection. Unfortunately, I had cut them the wrong way.

"Oh, you have done it wrong," he said and made a disgusted face. (As I write down here that Śrīla Prabhupāda was "disgusted" or "annoyed" or "angry" I would like to make it clear, in case it isn't, that Śrīla Prabhupāda showed these emotions in a purely instructive, self-controlled way. Not that he was victimized by passions. It was perfectly clear to me at the time exactly what was happening. He often said that chastisement, like encouragement, is one of the methods used by a teacher to instruct the pupil. Nevertheless, Prabhupāda's show of instructive disgust or anger was always cutting and fearful, as it was intended to be. Those outside devotional service may fail to understand this, but at least we should know that it is perfectly all right and loving in the exchange between the bona fide *guru* and his disciple.)

"Well," I replied, hurt and instinctively defensive, "I can learn to do it right."

"You will not be able to learn this," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "in three hundred years."

Accepting myself as a fool, I got up and went into the kitchen

where I quickly turned on the flame under the boiler. I then returned, enthusiastically and gratefully, to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda by giving him his massage.

The kitchen was better equipped than the servant's closet in L.A. I took advantage of the larger stove, using four burners at once, especially in the twenty-minute interim while Prabhupāda was bathing and dressing. I was able to separately cook different *sabjīs* in different pots and pans. But making *capātīs* was a problem. Without an open flame, the *capātīs* would burn and not puff up. Paṇḍitji came to help me, but he was so exasperated by the electric range that he went to Śrīla Prabhupāda and told him we were having difficulty making *capātīs* without a flame. Prabhupāda said we should keep trying, but bring in the *prasādam* on time.

Then Paṇḍitji got a brilliant idea. Using a flat metal strainer, he was able to place the *capātīs* very close to the red-hot electric coil, making them blow up into perfect balls. We excitedly finished preparing the meal and brought it to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who sat in his chair before the formica table, wearing several delicate garlands of pikake flowers.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's heavy silver tray with silver dishes and cups that I had carried with us from L.A., enhanced the appearance of his lunch. Prabhupāda preferred to eat in private, but from within the kitchen Paṇḍitji and I were able to watch, unnoticed, peering through the slots in the wooden shutters separating the rooms. We anxiously watched as Prabhupāda mixed together the rice, *dāl*, and *sabji* and began eating, a piece of *capātī* in his right hand. "Look, he's taking lots of *dāl*!" I whispered, happy to see his appetite for one of my preparations. My squash didn't seem to interest him.

"*Capātī!*" Prabhupāda called out, and Paṇḍitji rushed in with another of his expertly puffed-up *capātīs*, serving it hot onto Śrīla Prabhupāda's plate with a pair of tongs. Judging from Prabhupāda's hearty eating, the first lunch in Hawaii was an improvement and I grew more confident of my cooking.

While Prabhupāda rested, I tried quietly chanting my *japa* in

the dining room. After a half-hour I grew drowsy and lay down on the floor. Thoughts of all the duties yet undone crowded into my mind—typing, editing, letters, cleaning the kitchen, arranging for laundry. . . fragments of Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking entered my mind . . . the solidity of his philosophical realizations . . . my fortune in being able to soon see him again . . .

Suddenly I was awakened by the ringing phone. I ran to pick it up so it wouldn't wake Śrīla Prabhupāda. Rūpānuga was calling from Tennessee. I was happy to hear him, but he had a very unhappy report to make. Someone had thrown a fire-bomb into the house in Knoxville, where he was staying with three *brahmacārīs*. One of the *brahmacārīs* had caught on fire and had subsequently died in the hospital. Rūpānuga thought Prabhupāda should know and asked what ceremony they should perform for the boy's passing away. He told me some of the details—how the boy had impressed the hospital staff by his composure and his constant chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa while in a state of extreme pain from the burns all over his body. The attacker was unknown and the Knoxville police did not seem to be hot on the trail. I dutifully listened to the account and told Rūpānuga I would tell Śrīla Prabhupāda.

When Prabhupāda rose, he asked for a *dob*—the fresh water from a coconut. We had a collection of coconuts in the kitchen, and Sudāmā opened one, holding it on the rug in front of Prabhupāda and chopping it open with a machete. Prabhupāda said the drink was very nice, and he extolled the coconut, saying that if necessary one could live on coconuts by drinking their water and eating their fleshy insides.

Eventually, I told Prabhupāda about Rūpānuga's call.

Prabhupāda asked, "Was he chanting at the time he passed away?"

"Yes," I said, "according to the report he was."

"Then it is all right," said Prabhupāda. "He will go to Kṛṣṇa."

"Rūpānuga said that the people of Knoxville, Tennessee, are very upset by the incident."

"Of course they are upset," said Śrīla Prabhupāda sharply. "But

what can they do about it? They are jumping like monkeys in the water all day." Prabhupāda was referring to the tourists' wasting of precious time down at the beach. The people of Knoxville, and all *karmīs*, would always be upset—in illusion and always helpless before the material nature—as long as they did not take up genuine spiritual life. Prabhupāda advised the devotees in Tennessee to wait two days and then on the third day hold a feast in honor of the departed Vaiṣṇava soul who had given up his life for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"We have to die sooner or later in this body," Prabhupāda reasoned. "This is a nice opportunity that he was chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. We should not lament. It will not go in vain that devotees are risking their lives. Lord Jesus was crucified, and what are we in comparison to him? Kṛṣṇa was always fighting demons."

Later, toward evening, Śrīla Prabhupāda called us together—myself, Paṇḍitji, and Sudāmā. He said that since the temple was too far away we would not go there for an evening program but would hold our own with him. Prabhupāda began singing Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and then asked Sudāmā to take over and lead. Sudāmā began singing but in a different tune. He stopped and tried to sing it in the tune just used by Prabhupāda, but Prabhupāda said, "No, it is all right, sing it your way. You are doing it according to your own ecstasy." With Prabhupāda's permission I burned frankincense, and the atmosphere in his room became ecstatic. Prabhupāda sat back on his couch, and we danced, arms upraised before him—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

After *kīrtana* he asked each of us to read from the *Bhāgavatam* and then speak something according to our realization—what we had learned from him, in other words. I relished such a gathering with Prabhupāda even more than a big public preaching program, and I wished we could stay indefinitely in Hawaii in this way. The different ISKCON problems that came to Prabhupāda, and which I was now more aware of, were not forgotten, but through the *kīr-*

tana and preaching of philosophy I felt that the obstacles could all be overcome, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The following day, while I was preparing lunch and Śrīla Prabhupāda was bathing, Rāmeśvara and two G.B.C. men from America suddenly arrived at the door of the apartment. I was completely surprised, as they had not notified us in any way. Śrīla Prabhupāda soon heard their voices, and the next thing I knew they were walking into his room. Prabhupāda was also visibly startled to see so many devotees come suddenly from the U.S. to see him. They told him they just had to come to him to settle the problem of who would take over the work of the now resigned G.B.C. secretary for the western U.S. Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed to meet with them and asked them to stay for lunch. Fortunately I had cooked a large enough quantity to give at least one plate to each man. When one of the men expressed surprise that the cooking was so good, Śrīla Prabhupāda acknowledged that I was learning. Pleased by Prabhupāda's words, I was content to remain in the kitchen, cooking and cleaning, while Prabhupāda discussed with Rāmeśvara and the others. Had I not been Prabhupāda's menial servant, I could have participated in the discussion. But I was satisfied. I had my own heavy duties and I gladly took the opportunity the meeting afforded to catch up on my typing.

For a couple of hours Śrīla Prabhupāda gave directions, at least provisionally, how things should be managed in Karandhara's absence. He said that the matter should be permanently settled at the G.B.C. meeting in Māyāpur next month.

Days and nights passed happily in Hawaii. Prabhupāda dictated *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* at a good rate, enjoyed the available fruits and juices, daily met with the devotees at the temple to give *Bhāgavatam* class and go on his walk, and continued our exclusive evening program in his room. Sometimes at his request I would go down to

the hotel lobby and buy a pineapple from the store freezer, ride up in the elevator, and cut it up for him. When Prabhupāda found out that Paṇḍitji was sometimes spending hours sunbathing on the beach, he disapproved it as a waste of time. This made me afraid to leave the apartment even for a minute, although I had also thought of going to the ocean. The thought of Prabhupāda suddenly calling me while I was gone made me give up all desire for diversion.

He fixed his stay for a total of fourteen days in Hawaii, although I wished it were longer. I knew that when he reached India he would be very busy managing his projects there and seeing devotees throughout the day. And, as I had already experienced as his servant in India for one month in 1973, many of his countrymen would be at the door waiting to see him, although few of them were serious in approaching him as their spiritual master. I felt somewhat jealous, as we all had in New York City in 1966, when Śrīla Prabhupāda had wanted to leave for San Francisco. We had wanted him to stay with us, but we knew that it was imperative that he travel and preach. This time, however, I would be going along. Wherever he went in the world, a place was always reserved for the servant.

One afternoon Śrīla Prabhupāda rang his hand-bell and asked for a letter from the files. Knowing that the files were not in order, I went with apprehension to look for the letter. When I reported that I could not find it, he shook his head, "Why do you lose things?" Since it had happened now more than once, I thought maybe Śrīla Prabhupāda was going to remove me from his service. He didn't press the issue, but I went away thinking that he might just kick me out and get a better secretary. On my own initiative I returned to his room in a depressed mood. This was not something I would normally do—come before Śrīla Prabhupāda to express some personal mood of my own—but my mind was carrying me away. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," I said, "I am not deliberately attempting to be a poor secretary."

"I know that," he said.

"And I don't want to displease you by these mistakes."

"Just be a little careful," he said. By his indirect words and mild manner I could understand that he was basically not displeased with my secretarial service. Remembering my vow to follow up mistakes by rectification, I presented before Prabhupāda my practical dilemma.

"I think I have too many duties," I confessed. "I have to cook and clean and there is hardly time to do all the typing and editing."

"You should not have to cook then," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Let Paṇḍitji do that." And he called in Paṇḍitji, who agreed to at least share the cooking duties. I felt relieved, even though I realized I could not depend on Paṇḍitji. Prabhupāda said further that in India we would arrange for someone else to cook for him. "There are so many cooks," he said. Although I was becoming addicted to my cooking apprenticeship, it seemed sensible that someone else do it and allow me to become more proficient as secretary. Prabhupāda was so accommodating and kind, and again I felt foolish for getting into anxiety while in the shelter of his service.

One quiet afternoon, Prabhupāda called for me and I found him sitting pensively before the low glass table. As I offered obeisances and sat before him, Prabhupāda began talking, and at first I could not comprehend his meaning. "On this planet Earth," he said, "human beings live under the water, because Varuṇa has his palaces there." It was not so unusual for Prabhupāda to call in a secretary or servant and speak about something entirely philosophical from the *Bhāgavatam*. Most often he called for his secretary to execute some official function, but it only took a moment's adjustment to understand when Prabhupāda simply wanted to speak on Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"Kṛṣṇa built a city on the sea," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "This Pacific Ocean that we see here is just a smear of water on the table compared to the universes. Therefore it doesn't fall off." As he said this, Prabhupāda looked down at a small smear of water on his glass table. The small drop of water seemed to be the source of his present meditation. He looked at the small drop and then turned

toward the picture window and the vast sky and the Pacific Ocean.

Another evening he called me in to discuss his finances. I was aware that according to my ability and initiative I could expand my secretarial functions a great deal. But I had always been slow in financial matters. One day in Los Angeles Prabhupāda had asked me to figure out what 7 1/2 % of \$760 was. Not owning a calculator, I set out to figure it by simple multiplication, but since I hadn't done such a thing since my schooldays, I couldn't even do that. Prabhupāda had taken the paper from me and set up the proper multiplication method, which I then carried out. In Hawaii, however, he mainly wanted to review the position of ISKCON's funds in various bank accounts. I assisted him, going through the papers he kept in his white attaché case. When I finished reading the different bank statements to him, Prabhupāda seemed satisfied that he had heard enough.

"My position," he said, "is that when I deal with such apparently material affairs, it puzzles my brain." Prabhupāda paused and then added, "But if I give it up, then that will not be good either. That will produce another kind of headache. So we have to do these things for pushing on Kṛṣṇa consciousness." He was speaking of himself, but I took it as instructive.

The day of departure arrived. Our traveling party packed up, and we arrived at the airport to catch the plane to Tokyo. Almost all the devotees from the Honolulu temple were gathered at the airport, and they performed the most enthusiastic *kīrtana* of our whole visit. Prabhupāda had to walk down a long outdoor corridor to reach his flight, and as he did so, he was surrounded and followed by over thirty chanting and dancing devotees. The authorities did not object to the celebration, and Prabhupāda was smiling as he walked with the *kīrtana* group. Finally, they had to stay behind as we went with Prabhupāda through the last exit towards his plane.

"I think they have become more enthusiastic since I have come,"

said Prabhupāda looking back over his shoulder. "Therefore I have to travel to all the temples."

THREE

There was a big crowd of people waiting as we disembarked in Tokyo airport, but they weren't there to greet Śrīla Prabhupāda. Some of them held up signs to attract the attention of persons they were looking for, and they glanced past Prabhupāda with no interest. The people waiting were almost all Japanese, many of the men dressed in Western suits and ties, but soon we saw an American *sannyāsī*, dressed in saffron and carrying a *daṇḍa*. I had never met him but knew he must be Gopāla Swami, who I heard had only recently arrived in Japan. He approached Śrīla Prabhupāda, holding his palms together in obeisances, and then told us he had a car waiting.

Prabhupāda's first words were, "Where is Trivikrama Swami?"

Gopāla Swami said, "He has gone to Korea."

Prabhupāda seemed uneasy about the absence of Trivikrama, whom he had expected to be preaching here and greeting us. He said no more as he followed Gopāla through the crowded airport to the parking lot while Paṇḍitji and I struggled along behind, each carrying two briefcases and two or three bulging shoulder bags.

As we rode in a small car with Prabhupāda through the congested city, Prabhupāda asked me, "Is this your first time in Japan?" I replied, "Yes." I was grateful that he had asked. Although he had so many higher things to consider, he took time to make such an inquiry from an insignificant servant. From the car window we could see factory buildings on both sides and everywhere heavy traffic of small automobiles and pedestrians. The weather was cold—no more beaches and palm trees.

"These Japanese workers," Prabhupāda said, "are all simply *karmīs* involved in a fruitless pursuit." Gopāla Swami told how he had recently come here to stay with the few Western devotees maintaining a small house in the city. Some Japanese youths were coming, but the preaching was difficult because the people were so

materialistic. Prabhupāda reassured him that results would come if they persisted and distributed books. He mentioned that Sudāmā, who had been the first to come to Japan on Prabhupāda's behalf, had had some success and had even started learning the Japanese language, until he had grown restless and left.

We had planned to stay in Tokyo for only twenty-four hours. Gopāla Swami took us to the house and showed Prabhupāda his room, which was very tiny, like most places in Japan. It was the master bedroom, the largest room in the house, but it was maybe one-fifth as big as Prabhupāda's room in Hawaii, and there were no windows. There were four devotees living in the house, and they greeted Prabhupāda, although not with a *kīrtana*. Gopāla said there was one boy, an initiated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who was not living at the temple but who was anxiously pressing to meet with Prabhupāda and ask him questions. Prabhupāda agreed to see him, and within a few minutes of our arrival, while I was still unpacking Prabhupāda's briefcases, a young American man, dressed in Western clothes, entered Prabhupāda's room offered obeisances, and sat before Prabhupāda with a troubled look on his face.

Prabhupāda was wearing a sweater, with his *cādar* wrapped around him in the chilly room.

"Why don't you live with us?" Prabhupāda asked.

I got a good inside-glimpse of Prabhupāda, both as a world-traveling *sannyāsī*, ready to go anywhere, and as the supreme troubleshooter and maintainer of the devotees in ISKCON.

"I am not able to be free living within this movement," the discontented disciple replied.

"Where are you living?" Śrīla Prabhupāda asked. There were just a few of us in the room, but it was crowded. I was suffering somewhat from culture shock and from the discomfort of traveling, and it all made me take shelter in Prabhupāda more than usual. But I couldn't understand why Śrīla Prabhupāda had to immediately deal with this unsubmitive boy.

"I am living in the train station," he said.

"The train station?" asked Prabhupāda. "What is that like?"

The young man began describing his difficult life in the train station. The policemen would often wake him up and throw him out by force.

"So you have left us in order to have more freedom," said Prabhupāda, "But now you are living under force."

"Yes."

"If you do not like living with devotees," Prabhupāda continued, "you will find it even more difficult living under the strict control of the material nature. So give this up and live with us." But the boy remained reluctant, expressing a vague grudge and a misguided philosophy. Prabhupāda was encountering some of the same independent spirit he had met in Hawaii, where many persons claimed to be his disciples, but lived apart, espousing various philosophies under the influence of Ānandaji and others who spoke against ISKCON. I had hardly ever encountered this influence in the U.S. But I began to realize how things were different in other places around the world, even in ISKCON, and how Śrīla Prabhupāda had to confront many different mentalities and problems as he traveled.

About an hour after our arrival, Prabhupāda went into the tiny temple room. A few Japanese boys and girls were there waiting, and they received Prabhupāda respectfully. He sat on a *vyāsāsana* in a particularly relaxed way, leaning back while lecturing to the devotees and guests. At one point he spoke directly about the specific issue he had again encountered.

"If one serves the spiritual master and inquires from him," said Prabhupāda, "then the spiritual master is very liberal and generous and glad to answer. But in Kali-yuga many disagree even with their spiritual master. One cannot abandon the spiritual master and still claim to understand his instructions. If I say I love Kṛṣṇa, but I kick His devotee, what kind of love is that? If I want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious, I should live with the devotees and the Deities. Not

that, 'I love Kṛṣṇa' and go live in a train station."

Since we were staying so briefly, I didn't bother to unpack or set up my typewriter. We all stayed up rather late, and then I lay in my sleeping bag on the floor right outside Śrīla Prabhupāda's room. I felt good about my purpose in life, to be a watchdog at the door of my beloved spiritual master, and in that mentality the total strangeness of the mundane surroundings did not affect me. I was not really lying down in a dark hallway in Tokyo; I was outside Prabhupāda's room.

Early the next morning, Prabhupāda went on a walk through the streets near our house. It was very cold and snow covered the ground. Prabhupāda wore his long, hooded coat, which one of the devotees had made for him, and which I was now glad I had been lugging around with us since Los Angeles. Hardly anyone else was up yet, but when we met one elderly woman dressed in the traditional Japanese *sārī*, she bowed at the waist and seemed to respect Śrīla Prabhupāda as a saintly person. We entered a small park that would have covered an area no bigger than an empty street corner lot in the West. It was very intricately designed, and for me it was a fascinating, mystical adventure to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda down the narrow paths, ducking branches and exploring. Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted a verse by Śukadeva Gosvāmī, "Do the trees not give fruit? Do people not throw rejected clothes in the street? Are there not caves in the mountains?" Prabhupāda thus described the life of a true renunciate.

"The Japanese people," he said, "work so hard to live in nice houses. But Śukadeva Gosvāmī says there is no need to flatter materialists in order to get food, clothing and shelter. If one is renounced, then nature, under God's direction, can provide these necessities, and one can be freed to pursue self-realization."

Walking closely behind Śrīla Prabhupāda, I questioned, "But the hippies in Hawaii might say that they follow these verses of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, eating only fruit, and wearing discarded clothes."

"Therefore, *vairāgya* is useless without Kṛṣṇa consciousness," Prabhupāda replied. "Monkeys also live in the forest and eat fruits,

but they have many girlfriends and much sex life. If a human being lives like a monkey, then in his next life he will be an animal. Just as in this industrialized city of Tokyo, people are working hard for sense gratification, but in their next life they will be animals. Do you want to live as animals or go back to Godhead?"

Prabhupāda spent the rest of the day in his little room and again spoke about devotees straying away from the association of Vaiṣṇavas. "The deviators," Prabhupāda said, "claim they are above the rules and regulations of devotional service. But we never are. Follow these rules or you have to follow others. We must follow the traffic rules, the rules of birth, the rule of death, disease, and old age. These rascals claim that they are higher devotees, but in Hawaii they didn't come to see me to pay obeisances." In this way, Prabhupāda stressed that an advanced devotee was one who was faithful to the spiritual master and followed his program strictly. Anyone could be judged on that basis.

In the afternoon, a few officials from the Dai Nippon printing company, who had been printing Prabhupāda's books for years, came out and honored *prasādam* with Prabhupāda. One of these businessmen also accompanied us to the airport and stayed with Prabhupāda right up until we boarded the plane for Hong Kong.

I had so far not encountered any difficulty in making travel arrangements. We had round-the-world tickets, and everything was working on schedule. But just thinking of upcoming travel and baggage handling, communications with the next temple, and possible delays or difficulties, regularly put me into anxiety. But as things continued to go smoothly, I realized that I was not in control and that Kṛṣṇa was guiding Śrīla Prabhupāda, His pure devotee. It was as Śrutakīrti had remarked when he was leaving and I was joining as Prabhupāda's servant: there seemed to be a special protective aura around Prabhupāda and whoever traveled with him. Nevertheless, I continued my anxiety while traveling, thinking myself responsible for Prabhupāda's security and comfort.

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We landed in Hong Kong very late at night. Coming through the immigration and customs area, we saw Bhūrijana and his wife Jagattāriṇī standing with a big garland for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Bhūrijana wore a *dhōtī* and his wife a *sārī*, and they both wore Chinese mandarin jackets. Their greeting for Śrīla Prabhupāda was more emotional than Gopāla Swami's had been in Tokyo, but they seemed frightened. Prabhupāda's greeting to them was rather stern and grave. After putting the garland around Śrīla Prabhupāda, Bhūrijana stood by in a trance of confusion until I butted in, "What should we do with the luggage, Bhūrijana Prabhu?" Prabhupāda was looking at them intensely, and Bhūrijana and his wife looked like they were almost ready to faint. I had to repeat, "What should we do with the luggage, Bhūrijana Prabhu?" And only then did he move into action.

They had hired a black Rolls Royce limousine that pulled up, headlights blazing, outside the airport building. Bhūrijana and his wife asked me to get in the front with Paṇḍitji, while they rode in the back with Śrīla Prabhupāda. As we drove off and they began to talk, Jagattāriṇī reached forward and closed the glass partition dividing the front and back of the limousine. They didn't want me to hear, but I caught the gist of what was being said. They were another case of devotees who had abandoned the standard ISKCON programs, influenced by Ānandajī. In Hawaii, Sudāmā had mentioned to Śrīla Prabhupāda that Bhūrijana was also under Ānandajī's influence, and Prabhupāda had replied, "Yes, I know, that is why I am going there, to save him."

Before Jagattāriṇī had closed the partition, I had heard Prabhupāda ask, "Who is your spiritual master?" and Bhūrijana replied, "You are, Śrīla Prabhupāda." Then Prabhupāda asked, "So why did you close the temple?" and Bhūrijana began replying, "Well, Prabhupāda actually we haven't been having any morning program." After that, although I couldn't hear everything, I heard Prabhupāda shout, "They are rascals!" I guessed that he was referring to whoever told Bhūrijana not to have a regular temple pro-

gram. I also guessed that Prabhupāda was asking them what *did* they do as his representatives in Hong Kong—did they worship a Deity, did they distribute books? Since Ānandaji discouraged much distribution of books, they probably weren't doing it. One thing was clear from a glance at the back seat—Śrīla Prabhupāda was blasting Bhūrijana, and Bhūrijana and his wife were taking it as best they could, trembling and stunned. Śrīla Prabhupāda was strongly concerned, confronting the issue, and completely involved with his disciples. It was one in the morning as we drove through dark, deserted streets. I knew that Śrīla Prabhupāda must be straightening them out as only he could do, and I marveled in appreciation from my front, baggage-filled seat alongside a dozing Paṇḍitji and a silent chauffeur. Prabhupāda made everything clear wherever he went. He was never wishy-washy or himself confused by meeting a confused person. By the time the ride was over, as we pulled into the entrance of the Hong Kong Hilton Hotel, I was thinking that Śrīla Prabhupāda had possibly already accomplished the purpose of his visit, the rescuing of Bhūrijana and Jagattārīṇī.

Prabhupāda had not asked for any special accommodations, but Bhūrijana had rented the ultra-expensive Tibetan Suite, a top-floor apartment usually reserved by the highest ranking V.I.P.'s. At least Bhūrijana wasn't guilty of minimizing Prabhupāda's importance as a great personality worthy of the highest honor.

The suite consisted of four large rooms, including a huge living and reception room with a liquor bar and several plush couches and easy chairs. On the walls were thick tapestries, and large brass and marble sculptures stood in the hallways and in corners of some of the rooms. The motif was Tibetan art and included almost Hindu-like depictions of godly-looking persons with tall helmets as well as paintings of ascetic meditators and of gorgeous natural scenes, with high mountains and temples.

Prabhupāda's bedroom contained an enormous four-poster bed with a canopy and drapes. Every room had extra-thick rugs, and

there were several televisions and a number of phones for both instantaneous room service and outside calls. The only thing missing was a kitchen. I immediately asked Bhūrijana what to do about this. He said cooking in the rooms was not allowed, but that he would try to smuggle in an electric burner.

About a dozen Chinese people waited in the reception room, invited by Bhūrijana, and Prabhupāda immediately took a seat among them and began to give a lecture introducing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The unusual early morning hour didn't seem to affect anyone except me and Paṇḍitji. Everyone else was attentive and interested in the arrival of the spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda. In his lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that if one is himself a rascal then he cannot help anyone. It would be like a blind man leading another blind man. He praised the Kṛṣṇa consciousness way of life and then turned to Bhūrijana's wife, and asked, "Well, Jagattārīṇī, what do you think of our way of life?" She was still totally confused and upset. Prabhupāda had just completely changed her attitude about spiritual life and told her that she was following deviants, and now she wasn't sure what was right or wrong.

"I don't know," she answered.

Prabhupāda seemed angry. "You don't know and you are preaching? Then you are a cheater! You are supposed to be leading these people? What is this nonsense!"

Prabhupāda continued lecturing while the Chinese guests looked on, apparently unperturbed by his sharp exchange with his disciple. Prabhupāda referred to the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, and asked Bhūrijana to bring him a copy of the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, but Bhūrijana didn't have one. This serious omission also displeased Śrīla Prabhupāda. Bhūrijana started to "explain" why he had no books with him, but Prabhupāda didn't want to hear it. He ended his reception lecture and retired to the back room.

I thought Śrīla Prabhupāda would now want to take rest after his long journey, but he sat up in the rocker in his bedroom, and Bhūrijana and Jagattārīṇī went in and sat down before him while

he continued purifying their hearts. Since they had been so secretive about their talks in the car, I stayed outside the room and didn't dare suggest to Prabhupāda or to them that they should leave and let Prabhupāda take rest. I was exhausted and wanted to unpack and rest, but that didn't mean that Prabhupāda was tired.

After an hour Bhūrijana and Jagattāriṇī came out, and Prabhupāda finally took rest. I stayed up awhile talking with Bhūrijana about cooking and morning walk arrangements. And we also talked about Prabhupāda. Bhūrijana was feeling very grateful for the mercy Prabhupāda was giving him, even though it was coming more in the form of hot sauce than sweet nectar. There were still some lingering doubts on his mind. He had grown critical of Prabhupāda's basic programs almost without noticing what he was doing, so subtly had he had been advised, mostly by followers of Ānandaji.

As Bhūrijana spoke with me, I could better understand the craziness they had gotten themselves into. One of the cornerstones of their concocted philosophy was that among Prabhupāda's disciples only Ānandaji was an advanced or pure devotee. But Prabhupāda had now thoroughly smashed that illusion for Bhūrijana. My guess had been right as to whom Prabhupāda was addressing when he had shouted, "They are rascals!" in the back of the limousine. Bhūrijana confessed that he had gripes against some of the ISKCON leaders. I could agree with some of his complaints, but they should not have been the basis for his giving up his own Kṛṣṇa conscious practices and abandoning ISKCON. Bhūrijana said that in the limousine Prabhupāda had drilled him with question after question, asking, "Why did you give up the Deity worship?" and "Why have you given up book distribution?" and even "Why are you not reading my books?" In each case they had been guilty, but only when face to face with Prabhupāda had they realized that the programs they had abandoned were actually his heart and soul.

"Why did you give up reading Prabhupāda's books?" I asked.

"We stopped reading the books," said Bhūrijana, "because

Prabhupāda's teachings were so much backing up what ISKCON was doing. We felt ISKCON was "off," and it became painful to read Prabhupāda's books."

"How is ISKCON 'off'?" I asked.

"Well, some of the techniques that devotees use to distribute books," said Bhūrijana. "But Prabhupāda was explaining about book distribution. He said that devotees may be doing things wrong in book distribution, but because they are sincerely trying to follow the order of the spiritual master they are not wrong. He said I should not try to be a better moralist than the spiritual master."

"What else was Prabhupāda saying?" I asked.

"He was very angry about how some devotees want to be *"gurus"* immaturely. He was real angry about the devotee who was temple president in Hawaii, that he wanted to be known as spiritually advanced, and yet took money from the temple and wouldn't come and see Prabhupāda."

"But couldn't you see that by criticizing ISKCON you are criticizing Prabhupāda?" I asked.

"Yes, now I can see," said Bhūrijana. "I was into that anti-ISKCON mood, but factually we were criticizing Prabhupāda. That's the automatic step, although you may take it unknowingly, because it's Prabhupāda's movement and he's backing it so much."

Hearing Bhūrijana speak, it seemed to me that Prabhupāda had cleared out most of the poison from his heart. His wife, who stood nearby still looked like she was in a state of shock. She kept saying how heavy Prabhupāda had been in the limousine asking them the whole way, "Who is your spiritual master? What is your morning program? What time do you get up in the morning? Why did you do this? Why did you do that?" She said that after so many heavy questions he had asked her in his more usual, affectionate way, "How is your mother and father?" But by then she was unable to even speak.

"We thought they were like pure devotees," said Jagattārīṇī, "and Prabhupāda said, 'They are rascals.' That's what really shocked me."

After being with Prabhupāda, the two seemed to be completely in accord with whatever he had told them. But he had turned them so much around that they were still trying to grasp it with their minds and emotions. I suggested that we not stay up all night but take rest and then come back and see Prabhupāda in the morning. I said I was sure that Śrīla Prabhupāda would want to see them and talk about this more.

"I think he has come just to see you both," I said.

Although they were devastated, they had passed Prabhupāda's test: their attachment for him had outweighed their attachments to everything else. But Prabhupāda had had to personally, physically re-enter their lives to awaken that attachment, and therefore he had come to Hong Kong.

Later that morning we went for a walk on a steep, wind-swept peak overlooking a bay and skyscrapers. Prabhupāda said it reminded him of Darjeeling, a mountainous area of India. The weather was windy-cold, and Prabhupāda noticed that Paṇḍitji had no warm clothes. Prabhupāda therefore asked Bhūrijana to please buy Paṇḍitji a jacket or coat.

Several interested Hong Kong Chinese boys accompanied us, and they inquired submissively from Śrīla Prabhupāda. He very patiently and enthusiastically answered all their basic questions about the body, the soul, the next life, and God, discussing in depth the answer to each question.

While criticizing the foolish man who works hard with no knowledge of the soul, Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed to the clusters of tall buildings across the bay. "What is the purpose of these skyscrapers?" he asked. "They build them with such sturdy foundations, but those who build them will have to leave."

As we spoke the wind gusts made it hard to hear, and everyone but Prabhupāda was visibly shivering. For the sake of debate, I argued with Prabhupāda, "These buildings are being built so that

the owners will be able to enjoy them," I said.

"No," said Prabhupāda, "they will be kicked out of these buildings by death when they try to live in them."

"Well then," I said, "they can build these skyscrapers for the enjoyment of posterity. Their own family will enjoy them in the future, and they will get satisfaction from that."

"That is ridiculous!" laughed Prabhupāda. "What about oneself? One builds these skyscrapers actually to enjoy oneself, but he is not able to because he is kicked out by death. This is illusion, this building of skyscrapers for enjoyment. The skyscraper's foundation is firm, but the man's foundation is very flimsy."

After the walk, there was a press conference in the reception room of the Tibetan Suite. Half a dozen reporters and TV men, mostly Britishers, came and fired questions at Śrīla Prabhupāda in the usual manner. When Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned the need for renunciation, one of the men remarked, "You speak of renunciation, and here you are in the presidential suite."

"For me," Prabhupāda replied, "I could live under a tree, but would you come to the press conference?"

One of the men asked Prabhupāda his opinion of a popular, controversial *guru*. Prabhupāda had been asked such questions before, and he would sometimes say, "I don't know him, but in *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says . . .," or something like that—straightforward and yet avoiding a personal criticism. But this time Prabhupāda answered in an overwhelming way. "He is a cheater," Prabhupāda said. "He claims that he is God. Anyone who says that he is God is actually just the opposite. Instead of being G-O-D he is D-O-G." The answer caused a ripple of laughter and excitement among the reporters. They went on with further questions and then left.

I had been gradually procuring items to make Śrīla Prabhupāda a lunch. By 11:00 A.M. I had just barely enough vegetables, rice and spices to begin. Prabhupāda had noticed on the hotel menu that the restaurant supplied *jallebis*, and he asked that some hot *jallebis* be sent up to supplement his lunch. Although cooking in

a hotel living room proved difficult, somehow it all came together—thanks to Prabhupāda's triple-boiler and Paṇḍitji's strainer technique for making *capātīs* over an electric coil—and Prabhupāda had a normal lunch.

Miraculously, Śrīla Prabhupāda had done some *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* dictation that morning after being up all night, and at the first opportunity I set up the equipment and typed out his words. He had been translating Lord Caitanya's instructions to Rūpa Gosvāmī and was commenting on verses dealing with the *bhakti-latā-bīja*, the plant of devotional service. Lord Caitanya was describing to Rūpa that an offense to a Vaiṣṇava is like a mad elephant that destroys the young plant. In several of the purports Prabhupāda seemed to be addressing the discrepancies and problems that he had confronted in Hawaii and Hong Kong. One purport in particular pointed out the danger of so-called advanced devotees and the danger of leaving the society of devotees. As I typed out these words, I knew that I wanted to save them and show them to Bhūrijana and others:

When the *bhakti-latā* creeper is growing the devotee must protect it by fencing it all around. The neophyte devotee must be protected by being surrounded by pure devotees. In this way he will not give the maddened elephant a chance to uproot his *bhakti-latā* creeper. When one associates with nondevotees, the mad elephant is set loose. Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said: *asat saṅga tyāga—avaiṣṇava acāra*. The Vaiṣṇava is to give up the company of nondevotees. A so-called mature devotee, however, commits a great offense by giving up the company of pure devotees. The living entity is a social animal, and if one gives up the society of pure devotees, he must associate with nondevotees (*asat saṅga*). By contacting nondevotees and engaging in nondevotional activities, a so-called mature devotee will fall victim to the mad elephant offense. Whatever growth has taken place is quickly uprooted by such an offense. One should therefore be very careful to defend the creeper by fen-

cing it in—that is, by following the regulative principles and associating with pure devotees.

If one thinks that there are many pseudodevotees or nondevotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness society one can keep direct company with the spiritual master and if there is any doubt, one should consult the spiritual master. However, unless one follows the spiritual master's instructions and the regulative principles governing chanting and hearing the holy name of the Lord, one cannot become a pure devotee. By one's mental concoction one falls down.

But Prabhupāda already had in mind to share the purport with Bhūrijana. He called him to his room and played it right off the dictaphone tape, complete with all the pauses and dictaphone click-click sounds. Bhūrijana came out and told me that hearing the tape was like having arrows going into his heart. Now he and his wife were very contrite, considering themselves mad elephant offenders. I said that I didn't think that Prabhupāda meant they were offenders, not as long as they followed his instructions. They continued to feel devastated, but now they were clearly convinced that they had to follow Prabhupāda. Jagattāriṇī wanted to start performing Deity worship, at least in her home, since as yet they didn't have a formal temple in Hong Kong. And Bhūrijana wanted to surrender to whatever Prabhupāda wanted him to do. They bought Prabhupāda gifts, a soft gold ring with the letter "P" imprinted on it and a gold I.D. bracelet. Accepting the ring, Prabhupāda took a gold ring from his own finger, placed it in the ring box just given to him by Bhūrijana, and presented the ring and the box to Jagattāriṇī.

"If someone doesn't come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness," Prabhupāda said, "it is very unfortunate. If someone does come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then he is fortunate. But if someone comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and then leaves before he is mature, then that is the most unfortunate."

"Prabhupāda?" Bhūrijana said, "Yesterday you said that I should go to the Māyāpur festival and I said that I didn't want to. But if you want me to then I will go."

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "and bring some Chinese."

The Hong Kong newspapers ran accounts of Śrīla Prabhupāda's press conference: "Spiritual Leader of Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement Calls Popular Guru a Cheat." The following day *Newsweek* magazine published a short article with the heading, "Trouble in Nirvana." Prabhupāda chuckled as he read the report. "They have quoted me accurately," he said. "I did not want to speak against him, but they insisted. I could not help myself. I had to say it: he is a cheat. It is a fact. He says he is God, but if he has a toothache he will be in difficulty. What kind of God is that?"

Bhūrijana wanted to bring the good results of his preaching before Śrīla Prabhupāda. He said there was a nice Chinese gentleman who desired to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda. Bhūrijana had used the word "gentleman" to describe Yung Pak Hei, even though Yung was only twenty-five years old. He felt the word fitting because Yung was a reserved young man and wore a shirt with a tie. But when Bhūrijana brought Yung before Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda asked, "Where is the gentleman?", since he was expecting an elderly man.

Yung Pak had become attracted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness through Bhūrijana's preaching, and he was now chanting sixteen rounds and donating money from his job as an engineer.

In a respectful and confidential spirit he inquired from Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I am still attached to my family. So I want to know, can I still prosecute Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

With disarming boldness, Prabhupāda replied, "It is not very surprising that you are attached to your family. Even the birds and dogs and cats are attached to their families." Yung Pak Hei took the remark like a gentleman and became very attached to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The next time he saw Prabhupāda, Yung bowed down

and made fully prostrated obeisances.

"This is an advanced devotee," exclaimed Śrīla Prabhupāda, "one who makes obeisances to the spiritual master, not one who goes away to seek his own prestige."

On the last morning in Hong Kong, which was particularly cold, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked me to stay back from the morning walk and make some *balavā* for his breakfast. As usual, the sincere young Chinese men were going on the walk, and so there would be good Kṛṣṇa conscious questions and answers. I would have liked to have gone walking with Śrīla Prabhupāda up on that Chinese peak. But Bhūrijana and his wife were also going along, so Prabhupāda had plenty of company. Staying back to cook was my duty.

As usual, I had to hustle up the ingredients, this time from the hotel restaurant. They gave me just enough butter and grains for one portion. For an hour I worked carefully, determined to make good *balavā*. I knew what I wanted: a thick, buttery, hot *balavā*, the grains slightly dark. The right texture, the right amount of water, enough sugar but not too much . . .

Prabhupāda and the devotees came back just as I was finishing. They looked uncomfortable from the cold, and Bhūrijana said that he had asked Prabhupāda to turn back from the walk because Prabhupāda himself looked like he was getting cold. A perfect occasion for *balavā*.

Prabhupāda sat for breakfast, and I put a large bowl of the rich *balavā* before him. After about ten minutes, he rang the bell. I entered his room and began cleaning his eating area. He had eaten almost the whole bowlful. I was already feeling blissful when he asked, "Who has made this *balavā*?"

"I did," I replied.

"It is very good," Prabhupāda said, and without looking at me he went into the bathroom to wash his mouth. There was always something special about pleasing Prabhupāda by cooking—and this

time in particular. I had carefully prepared him a bowl of *balavā*, that's all. But my satisfaction upon hearing his words of appreciation was so deep that it vanquished all my anxiety and unhappiness. There is nothing as rewarding as pleasing the spiritual master.

I didn't think we would be seeing much of Ānandaji's anti-ISKCON preachings in India, where we were going next. But as far as I could understand, he had attempted to cause a split in Prabhupāda's movement. And Prabhupāda had repaired it. It seemed to me a most dangerous thing, a split. So I wanted to ask Prabhupāda something more about it, although up to now I had not been much involved. At an opportune time, I approached Śrīla Prabhupāda and asked, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, what about splits in our movement?"

Prabhupāda immediately cut me off. "There is no such thing as a split," he said. "There is only insincerity, that's all. I chant sixteen rounds and follow the principles and preach and you do also. There is no split. Only if one is insincere and doesn't follow."

I said no more. My very uttering of the word "split" had seemed impertinent to him. I took his fiery reaction to mean that there is no justification for disciples working against the spiritual master's movement. His movement and the directions he gives are perfectly clear, and everyone should follow. If someone doesn't follow, he cannot be credited with creating something separate, as if the "split" is a new spiritual entity. Rather such a person dies spiritually. He becomes *asāra*, or useless, as had the disobedient sons of Advait-ācārya, whom Prabhupāda had described in a *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* purport. Those who leave ISKCON are *apa-sampradāya*. They are like a branch broken off from a tree; they wither away. At least that is my understanding. And from what I saw of Śrīla Prabhupāda in action as he traveled from Hawaii to Japan to Hong Kong, fighting an outbreak of propaganda against his ISKCON, he gave no credence to a split.

FOUR

It was in India that I first began to doubt whether being Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary-servant was my permanent service to His Divine Grace. From time to time I had felt restless. All services have their difficulties, or austerities, and so did the service of being servant. For example, I usually stayed in a room next to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and so I had to chant my *japa* silently. Almost always on call, I could not attend *āratis* in the temple or associate much with my Godbrothers. How flimsy these objections sound when one considers that as a servant I had the unique privilege of always being in the company of the greatest of all pure devotees.

My restlessness really was not only due to remaining silent in the room next door or to not attending the temple programs. It especially occurred when I would see Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking to his leading disciples and encouraging them in their bold, productive preaching efforts. I felt a yearning, for example, when Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Pañcadraviḍa Swami from Hawaii encouraging him to go on traveling through South India like a real *sannyāsī* on behalf of his spiritual master; or when Rāmeśvara and the G.B.C. devotees had flown in to see Śrīla Prabhupāda, received his orders, and flown off to manage important affairs on his behalf. I had typed the letter to Pañcadraviḍa Swami, and I had cooked and served *prasādam* to Rāmeśvara and the others, but sometimes I couldn't help feeling a little bit like a backroom Cinderella. So far I had tried to avoid thinking the grass was greener in another field. The travel eastward had been very active, and there had been occasion for nectarean, private association with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I was always busy, still attempting to learn the functions of secretary and servant—and I was thrilled and strengthened to be able to see first-hand how Śrīla Prabhupāda handled controversies and

defended his ISKCON. But on arriving in India, the feeling of restlessness increased.

We flew into New Delhi at two in the morning. Tejās dāsa, the temple president, met us along with a few other devotees, each holding orange marigold garlands.

I had been to India for one month in 1973, living with Śrīla Prabhupāda as a visiting G.B.C. secretary and performing many of the same services that I was doing now. I had found India exciting—less violent and without the heavy agitation of the West—but I had been somewhat bewildered by the heat, the primitive conditions, and the language barrier. I was glad to be experiencing India, therefore, in the protection of Prabhupāda's personal association.

The Delhi ISKCON center was in a small rented house. Śrīla Prabhupāda's room was located on the roof, and the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, whom he had named Rādhā-Pārthāsārathi, were also situated in a room on the roof. The February predawn air was freezing cold, but I attended the *maṅgala-ārati* (rare for me), standing outdoors under the open sky and looking into the Deity room. The black, elegant form of Kṛṣṇa and the white form of Rādhārāṇī, both dressed in well-tailored nightclothes received the devotees' worship.

When the sun was up and Śrīla Prabhupāda had taken breakfast, we started out for Vṛndāvana. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, Prabhupāda's G.B.C. secretary for all of India, indicated I should sit in the back seat next to Prabhupāda. I never took it for granted that I automatically had the privilege of riding with Śrīla Prabhupāda, but Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said, "Of course. You are Prabhupāda's servant. You should always ride with him." That was practical: I was carrying Śrīla Prabhupāda's luggage, and if there was anything he needed, it was I who would be expected to get it. It was for Prabhupāda's convenience that there existed such devotee-occupations as ser-

vant and personal secretary, but it was also the good fortune of a particular disciple to be able to ride like that with Śrīla Prabhupāda. When taking that special seat beside His Divine Grace, I never ceased to count my blessings and to think about how to serve him during the car ride.

We were well on the way to Vṛndāvana, passing through the villages, farms, and undeveloped land, when our car came up behind a typical old Indian bus and our driver began honking his horn for room to pass. The bus was battered and poured thick black smoke from its exhaust pipe.

Prabhupāda looked my way and said, "Do you have buses like this in America?" He knew very well from his years in America that this bus was a special specimen of Indian technological backwardness. "Even if you had a bus like this in America," he added, "they wouldn't allow it on the road." Everyone shared a laugh with Śrīla Prabhupāda, but I also took his remark in a personal way. I felt he was trying to reduce whatever culture shock he thought I might be experiencing. In case I was lamenting over the primitive Indian conditions, or wishing myself back in the land of velvetlike roads and Greyhound buses, Prabhupāda was making a humorous comparison so that I could see the terrible Indian bus in a softer, more kindly light. At least Prabhupāda's words had that effect on me, and when he asked me if it was my first time in Vṛndāvana (which it was), I knew he was watching over me like a father. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not dote or baby his disciples, but those few kind words were enough to bring my jet-lagged mind and body into sharp focus for appreciation of Prabhupāda and our entrance into the holy *dhāma*.

I did not expect Prabhupāda to talk about Kṛṣṇa's *vraja-līlā* just because we were entering Vṛndāvana. Thoughts of such spiritual pastimes were always alive within him wherever he was in the world, but he was also a very grave personality. He was silent during most of the trip, making a few comments about the progress of the ISKCON temple construction in Vṛndāvana. He had already fully

described Vṛndāvana and Lord Kṛṣṇa in his *Kṛṣṇa* book, and as our little Ambassador car came nearer to Mathurā and Vṛndāvana I thought of the descriptions of lush vegetation, *surabhi* cows with milk-dripping udders, ecstatic cowherd men and women—and I saw that the present Vṛndāvana was suffering by comparison. Yet even I could feel an inkling of the Vṛndāvana atmosphere, and I recalled Prabhupāda's writing that one cannot enter Vṛndāvana just by the external act of purchasing a ticket or driving there in a car. But if I could ever expect to understand Vṛndāvana at all, there was certainly no better opportunity than to go there as a servant of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee.

The place at Ramaṇa-reti was just a building site. Metal rods were sticking up, a foundation was laid, but the only building was the first story of Prabhupāda's red brick residential house. His room wasn't quite ready. The floor was dirt and bricks covered by a rug, the walls were damp, and the room itself was very cold. It was a large room that could serve as gathering place, and Prabhupāda's study fitted into one corner.

Prabhupāda was very pleased. He sat at his desk smiling, thanking the devotees for working so hard. Surabhi, the disciple in charge of construction, admitted to Śrīla Prabhupāda that they had worked up until the last minute before his arrival, and yet they still weren't finished. The devotees and hired workers had toiled at a marathon pace day and night for weeks. Surabhi said that they had just cemented the walls in Śrīla Prabhupāda's room and had tried to dry them with special heating lamps. But that had brought out bugs and flies. So his room was in a rather crude state, but Prabhupāda wasn't at all critical; he was happy that they had done it. Yet he emphasized that everyone should continue to work hard and finish the entire Krishna-Balaram temple by Janmāṣṭamī, seven or eight months ahead. It was asking a lot, but Prabhupāda was serious. He was simultaneously very pleased with the crude state of his freezing cold room in Vṛndāvana, and at the same time he put before his devotees the difficult task of completing the work.

I set up my desk in a room next to Prabhupāda's. Anyone coming to see Prabhupāda would have to pass by me, so that I could screen them. I knew from my previous month with Śrīla Prabhupāda in India in 1973 that many Indians would be coming to see him, and if I let them all in, Prabhupāda would have no time for anything else. Within minutes, people started coming by, but I told them that Śrīla Prabhupāda wouldn't be seeing guests until the evening. These were *brijbasis*, residents of Vṛndāvana, some of them old *sādhus* in saffron cloth with gray beards, or men with their wives, or poor, simple villagers. No one seemed satisfied to be denied entrance by an upstart young Westerner such as me, but to protect Prabhupāda I took the risk and denied all except those whom I knew were important to Prabhupāda, or those recommended by the temple president.

Sitting in my room, I began typing letters dictated by Prabhupāda. Cooking duties were no longer required of me since Yamunā dāśī, the wife of the temple president, Guru dāsa, was a favorite cook of Prabhupāda's and expert at working under Vṛndāvana conditions. There was also a girl with a typewriter who was eager to type up Prabhupāda's *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* tapes, so I also relinquished that duty, with Prabhupāda's permission.

While on an errand for Prabhupāda, I left his door unattended for a minute, and immediately a *brijbasi* man—one I had previously denied—slipped into Prabhupāda's room. I remanned my post, angry at the fellow for barging in. It seemed to me that very few of these visitors were serious about surrendering to Prabhupāda.

But after a few minutes Prabhupāda rang his bell. I entered and sat before Śrīla Prabhupāda. The room was dark, even with the lights on, and the floors and walls were cold. But Prabhupāda's eyes had a special, beautiful glow. He was obviously more at home here in Vṛndāvana than at the Hong Kong Hilton.

"This man says that you wouldn't let him in," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. I darted a look at the man, who was a middle-aged Indian, but I had to restrain my anger.

"I told him that you would have evening visiting hours," I said.

"No, you should not have kept him out," said Prabhupāda in a mild but reprimanding tone. "Who told you to keep him out?"

I said that I was sorry. The man, however, repeated that I had rudely kept him out.

"They do not know," said Prabhupāda sympathizing with his guest. "They have no proper training."

"Yes," the man agreed, looking me over. "No training."

I suspected that Prabhupāda had reprimanded me to pacify the visitor, and I was sorry that Prabhupāda's time was now being taken up by a man who went on talking about himself.

The incident made me lose my confidence, and I proceeded to let a few more casual visitors enter Prabhupāda's room, out of fear that they also might tell on me and get Śrīla Prabhupāda to chastise me. But when Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Guru dāsa saw me letting people in, they didn't like it.

"You're supposed to protect Prabhupāda from so many visitors," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "Don't be so easygoing." Guru dāsa also looked at me worriedly, as if I wasn't fit to guard Prabhupāda's door, and I began to feel helpless.

When the last barge-in guests left Śrīla Prabhupāda just a few minutes before his scheduled visiting hours, I went in and impulsively began to reveal my mind.

"Prabhupāda, I didn't want you to be disturbed, but I see that sometimes you want to see guests and I shouldn't check them. But my Godbrothers are telling me that I was not doing my duty properly. So what am I supposed to do?" I was in anxiety, almost babbling, when Śrīla Prabhupāda said calmly, "Everything is all right." At his words, spoken as a father speaks to reassure a crying, frightened child, I realized that Śrīla Prabhupāda was truly *dhīra*, undisturbed. Whether too many guests came or no guests, he was with Kṛṣṇa, and everything was all right.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Guru dāsa arrived a moment later, and Prabhupāda confided in us all that he was, in fact, disturbed by the number of guests. Hearing this, I regained my resolve to keep

out unscheduled visitors, despite the risk.

At 7 P.M. Prabhupāda allowed everyone to enter, and the large room filled up with about a hundred people, including about thirty of his disciples. A small light was on Prabhupāda's desk, and several naked light bulbs were fixed on the wall. The total lighting effect, although dim, was exciting. We all took part in an enthusiastic *kīrtana*, singing and dancing before Śrīla Prabhupāda, who played his shining *karatālas* and sang along with the chorus, completely absorbed in chanting with the devotees. Someone had given him a woolen hat which fit under his chin, and he wore his heaviest sweater as well as a *cādar*.

After the *kīrtana* he spoke about the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana and how they practiced *tapasya*.

"The *tapasvīs* in Vṛndāvana," said Prabhupāda, "go naked, even in the cold. They are determined not to come back again to material life. Of course, nowadays we cannot execute such severe austerities. But even if we try to live in comfort, we will suffer. And if we think, 'All right, it is miserable, but let me enjoy' still we have to die. So our penance is to voluntarily take pains for Kṛṣṇa. He comes to save the fallen souls. He comes Himself, He sends His devotees, He leaves His books. If we help a little, He will be pleased. That is our penance."

After his lecture, an American devotee visiting Vṛndāvana asked Prabhupāda, "What is the difference between Goloka and Vṛndāvana?"

"None," replied Prabhupāda. "But your mind is in America. Fix your mind at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and you are always in Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa is everywhere."

I woke to the sound of Prabhupāda dictating *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. It was only 2 A.M., and so I stayed huddled in my sleeping bag. But it was the most wonderful, welcome sound. It meant the whole world was being taken care of.

I dozed off, waking again at 3 A.M. Now Prabhupāda's room was

quiet, and I knew he must be chanting on his beads. The outhouse and the bucket for bathing were in the back yard, and as I quietly left the building I could hear peacocks calling loudly to one another from the trees. In the distance, dogs were barking and a radio played a Hindi song. The pinching cold made me remember Śrīla Prabhupāda's *tapasya* lecture, but I enjoyed it all, looking up at the clear starry sky and thinking, "I am in Vṛndāvana with Prabhupāda." As quickly as possible, I returned to my room and began silently fingering my beads and mouthing the words: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

About 4 A.M., Śrīla Prabhupāda rang his bell. Entering with joy, I made my obeisances before Śrīla Prabhupāda, who sat behind his dim desk light looking as solid as the Himalayas.

"Jaya, Śrīla Prabhupāda!"

"Jaya. I want to see Tamāla Kṛṣṇa," said Prabhupāda.

"Yes, Prabhupāda." I was immediately on my feet and off to run the errand. But I couldn't help feeling envious. "I am very unimportant," I thought. "Prabhupāda has many important things to discuss with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, but not with me. I am just an errand boy because I am so unqualified."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa stayed in a small mud-baked hut with a straw roof, and I knocked on his door and called him.

"Prabhupāda wants to see you," I said, and he hurried out. Together we walked back to Prabhupāda's room.

"Did he say why?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"No," I replied, "I don't know. He just asked for you."

Opening the door to Prabhupāda's room for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, I discretely stayed in my room and shut the door. But I could hear about half of what they were saying. As G.B.C. for India, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was involved in carrying out all Śrīla Prabhupāda's plans for preaching in India and there were many things Prabhupāda wanted to discuss with his man-in-charge. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami was used to speaking very openly with Śrīla Prabhupāda. He wanted

to know Prabhupāda's mind on different subjects, and he also revealed his own views. At one point he asked Śrīla Prabhupāda whether it was better for a *grhastha* or a *sannyāsī* to be in charge of the temples. They also discussed how much emphasis to put on different preaching programs and how to best engage the devotees. They discussed each of the ISKCON centers in India and various personnel, legal, financial, and spiritual problems. Prabhupāda was particularly concerned with the construction schedule for the Krishna-Balaram temple.

I would have liked to have been inside the room to hear Prabhupāda's valuable instructions, but I had not been invited. And why should I be invited? I was the secretary-servant. My duty was to get Śrīla Prabhupāda a fresh *nīm* twig for brushing his teeth, to prepare his clothes, get his medicine, clean his room—and go get important devotees like Tamāla Kṛṣṇa for him to speak with. Feeling somewhat sorry for myself, I tried chanting my silent *japa*, but it was now more difficult than ever, as I was trying to listen at the door and as my mind was beating me with foolish thoughts.

It further occurred to me that if I wanted to take on more important managerial duties, there was nothing preventing me from doing so. It would not be unfitting if as we traveled I assumed the position of Śrīla Prabhupāda's representative, looking into the management, finances, and direction of preaching in each place. But that was not my inclination—to assert myself everywhere. Nor was I qualified. I should type the letters, do the menial duties and simply travel everywhere with Śrīla Prabhupāda, I told myself. That satisfied Śrīla Prabhupāda, so why shouldn't it satisfy me? Just the fact that Prabhupāda wasn't kicking me out should have been enough to satisfy me. How could I be so ungrateful? Even the big leaders, although called in by Śrīla Prabhupāda, would be left behind in their zones while I went on accompanying Śrīla Prabhupāda *everywhere*. What did it matter if I was a menial servant? Wasn't that my constitutional position?

In this way, I reasoned with myself as I stood in the darkness

outside Prabhupāda's room. Prabhupāda had called me just to get an important devotee so that he could speak with him. And if I was just a shoe-carrier and nothing more than that, that was due entirely to my own laziness and lack of surrender. And yet the other side of me—false pride—continued.

Eventually Tamāla Kṛṣṇa came out, and I got ready to accompany Śrīla Prabhupāda on his morning walk. I recovered my wits, realizing I had had an attack of *māyā*, resulting in restlessness in my service.

The air was cold enough to make white vapor as we breathed. But as the sun rose it would become warm. Enduring the weather was one of the honest austerities of Vṛndāvana, as was the lack of technological amenities. Desiring to cast off my foolish thoughts, I turned to Prabhupāda as he began his walk.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," I said, "it seems that India has all spiritual knowledge. But here they can't even keep the electricity on, whereas in the West they have material advancement. So they should combine. Is that possible?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, and he seemed enlivened at what I had said, "that is my mission. To combine them." Along with about ten devotees, Prabhupāda stepped into the sandy lane and walked in the direction of the old *parikrama* trail of Vṛndāvana.

"The material side is also necessary," he continued. "But in the West they even have a machine for shaving. It is all for the itching sensation, sex—that which is insignificant, abominable. The whole intelligence is being employed like a dog or cat."

Off the lane we saw two *bābājīs*, wearing only small white cloths. They were crouched before a small fire, warming their bodies.

"Vṛndāvana is the gift of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs," Prabhupāda said, "The meaning of *gosvāmī* can be found in the prayers to the six Gosvāmīs. They were wealthy government leaders, but they gave up everything and became beggars, accept-

ing one cloth and always thinking of the *gopīs*. They gave contributions of many books so people could take advantage and become Kṛṣṇa conscious. Now we see many imitations of Rūpa Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana today. We shouldn't imitate the dress of Rūpa Gosvāmī, while at the same time we cannot give up our cigarettes. It is the gift of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswami that we should not jump and try to change our garment all of a sudden. We should try to hear the Absolute Truth from realized souls, and then we can conquer Ajita, Kṛṣṇa, the unconquerable."

One of Prabhupāda's disciples working on the Vṛndāvana project came closer to Prabhupāda and asked, "Prabhupāda, some of the *smārta-brāhmaṇas* are very caste conscious, and they don't accept that Westerners can be *brāhmaṇas*. What should we say to them?"

"Tell them that Bhārata-varṣa means the whole world," said Prabhupāda. "The real term is Bhārata-varṣa not India. Tell them that the first *brāhmaṇa* was not an Indian. That is Lord Brahmā. We have knowledge which makes us *brāhmaṇa*, and they do not. They eat fish. They eat anything. But our men here in Vṛndāvana, should become actually *gosvāmī*. That means detached from sex and eating and sleeping. They must become actually *gosvāmī* by always engaging in Kṛṣṇa's service.

"Prabhupāda," another devotee came forward, "you are like the hometown boy who made good here in Vṛndāvana. The people are proud of you."

"They should be proud," said Prabhupāda dryly. "They couldn't do anything." Together the group walked onto the *parikrama* trail where the Yamunā River used to flow. Many pilgrims were on their way to visit the temples, workers on bicycles and men with donkeys or ox carts carried their various wares. But almost everyone greeted Prabhupāda, saying, "Jaya Rādhel" And he warmly responded, "Hare Kṛṣṇa!"

Prabhupāda turned into an abandoned field where we saw many peacocks—the resplendent males as well as the plainer females.

Guru dāsa remarked, "Among the birds, the males are more beautiful than the females."

"Among the humans the women are," said Prabhupāda. "And among the Mohammedans a man with a big beard and mustache is considered very beautiful."

"Then we are the least beautiful," said Guru dāsa. "We have no hairs."

"Yes, nobody likes us," said Prabhupāda, smiling. "We are neither male or female. No one knows who we are. It is very good. If you are attracted to neither male nor female, you are liberated."

Prabhupāda had everyone laughing, but even the humorous moment was deep with self-realization. As I hurried to keep my servant's place at Prabhupāda's side, I felt all my desires for seeing Vṛndāvana through his eyes were being fulfilled. He was truly leading us into the meaning of the *dhāma*. If only I could stop dwelling on bodily and mental considerations and simply surrender to his service.

As Prabhupāda led us onto the main road, I asked, "In the *Kṛṣṇa* book you have written that the people in Vṛndāvana don't need a spiritual master because Kṛṣṇa is their spiritual master. What does this mean?"

"Yes," replied Prabhupāda, "They have the excellent spiritual master. But just as one may have a spiritual master and not obey him, then what is his position? So they are fallen who do nonsense things in Vṛndāvana, but their fortune is also there, that they are born in Vṛndāvana. But they may misuse that fortune."

As we walked, Prabhupāda remarked that Vṛndāvana was becoming like a desert and that in the future it would become more so. He said it was because of impiety in Vṛndāvana.

"In the West," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "I see in America, Germany, there is so much green. But not here."

"But Śrīla Prabhupāda," I asked, "how can it be? The West is not more impious than Vṛndāvana?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "But when I came to the West you

did not know anything about Kṛṣṇa. You did not even know that meat-eating and illicit sex were bad. And when I told you to stop, you did it. But Vṛndāvana is Kṛṣṇa's land, yet they are eating meat and having illicit sex. So the reaction is even worse. They are being punished directly by Kṛṣṇa."

In the evening lecture there was more. Prabhupāda spoke on a *Bhāgavatam* verse before a room so crowded with guests that they were also standing in the adjoining room, straining to see and hear.

"India is the only land that has spiritual knowledge. There is no doubt about it," said Prabhupāda. "But instead of distributing this knowledge, the government is opening wine and beef shops. I went alone to the West to preach *Bhagavad-gītā*, and now these American boys and girls are helping me. Those who say that these Western devotees are fools are simply envious. My Guru Mahārāja gave an example of an envious person. One envious man heard that his friend had become a judge. 'No, it cannot be,' he said. 'Yes, I have seen him on the high court bench,' someone replied. Then the envious man said, 'Oh, then he must not be getting a salary.' In this way they are always envious."

Prabhupāda went on to speak of the meaning of Vṛndāvana and how it cannot be understood with material vision. "Vṛndāvana is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. It is *cintāmaṇi-dhāma*. Narottama dāsa says that it is not possible to see Vṛndāvana if you have *viṣayī*, material desires. So we should take shelter of Gaura-Nitāi and become cleansed of the desire for eating, sleeping, and mating.

"There are many devotees who leave their families and come to Vṛndāvana, giving up all material desires, and completely depending on Kṛṣṇa. They are not disturbed even by heat or cold.

"But there are others, the *sabaiyās*, whose personal behavior is offensive. Although they talk of Kṛṣṇa's intimate pastimes with the *gopīs*, they spend their time smoking *biḍis*, and thinking of money and women.

"Vṛndāvana-dhāma is worshipable. Don't commit an offense here. It is not a place for eating *prasādam* and sleeping, but for following

the advice of Vṛndāvana Candra, Kṛṣṇa, and broadcasting His message. If you avoid offenses, you will see Vṛndāvana."

After one of Prabhupāda's evening talks, one of the devotees asked whether the service one does in Vṛndāvana has a special effect.

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, "if you do one-percent service here it has the effect one hundred times. And whatever offense you commit in Vṛndāvana also has the effect one hundred times. Ordinary persons are therefore advised to visit a holy place for no more than three days, because once they get acclimatized to the place, they will begin their sinful activities. Better come, become purified, and leave on the fourth day. The worst offense to Vṛndāvana is to commit illicit sex here.

"So it is very risky. Just like if a gambler has the opportunity to profit a hundred times or a hundred times lose. That is the special atmosphere of Vṛndāvana. And you cannot play hide and seek with Kṛṣṇa. The sun and moon are His eyes, and He is also in your heart. Kṛṣṇa knows everything. Just as I know everything in my room, Kṛṣṇa knows everything everywhere. He even knows what you are planning and thinking in your heart. So you cannot play tricks with Kṛṣṇa. Those who want to be devotees have to be sincere. Nor should devotees accept one part of what Kṛṣṇa says and reject the other. Arjuna, for example, said, 'I totally accept everything You have said.' That goes for all devotees. They should follow Arjuna's examples. Be sincere with Kṛṣṇa and His representative. Preach this gospel of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and become a spiritual master."

When Prabhupāda closed the evening, the guests all offered their obeisances in thanks and began to exit, passing through the servant's room. It was a gala spiritual and social event for Vṛndāvana, and everyone seemed very pleased with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Finally, I was again alone with Śrīla Prabhupāda. He asked for

a cup of hot milk and some *purīs* and eggplant, which I helped Yamunā prepare in the kitchen. I brought all these things to Prabhupāda and later cleaned his eating place while he washed his mouth. Of all satisfied persons, he was the most satisfied, moving about in his new quarters, even though the rooms were rough and unheated.

When he retired to his bedroom, where we had put a thick quilt on his bed, I swept the floor in the main room and turned off all the lights. Wearing all my available clothes, including sweaters and a hat, I climbed into my sleeping bag in the dark, thinking over Śrīla Prabhupāda's words. I especially considered his advice not to cheat Kṛṣṇa and his representative and how Kṛṣṇa sees everything in our hearts.

At times like these, when the mind reverberated with the recent words of Prabhupāda and the heart glowed from his Kṛṣṇa conscious presence, spiritual progress seemed very tangible and detachment from matter was within reach. All petty thoughts could be pushed aside in a Kṛṣṇa conscious meditation. I knew anomalies like my restlessness would reoccur. Such disturbances were not constant, but would come again. For the most part, however, I knew I was content with my duties and would do whatever Prabhupāda asked of me. Or so I prayed to Kṛṣṇa—not to be an offender in the *dhāma*.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda was soon traveling again, Paṇḍitji and I with him, to Calcutta en route to Māyāpur for the first international gathering of ISKCON devotees.

One day in Calcutta I received another short, but merciful chastisement. It had to do with the kitchen in the Calcutta temple, which I found chaotic, and, in some details, unclean. Śrīla Prabhupāda had asked me to learn how to cook *śukta* from his sister, Piśimā, and so I was observing her working in the kitchen.

I had met Piśimā in 1973 and found her kind to *sannyāsīs*—she liked to bring them food—and she was of course very devoted to her brother, Śrīla Prabhupāda, constantly coming by to bring him a *tiffin* full of preparations cooked in mustard oil and heavy with spices. Devotees sometimes dreaded offering them to Prabhupāda, fearing they would cause him indigestion, but Piśimā had a free pass to enter Prabhupāda's room whenever she desired and to offer him her devotedly prepared foodstuff.

Prabhupāda particularly liked her *shukta*. He had taught me in Los Angeles how to make this wet vegetable preparation using *kerela* (bitter melon), squash, cauliflower, potatoes, *pakorā*, eggplant and yogurt, and I had written it down in a notebook. But I had never mastered the intricate steps necessary to make it to Prabhupāda's satisfaction. Although I could not speak any Bengali and Piśimā could not speak any English, I *watched* her very carefully and took notes. She had her own techniques and ingredients for *shukta* in addition to what Śrīla Prabhupāda had showed me, and I tried to study and memorize each step. For two successive days—the duration of our stay in Calcutta—I watched the operation and felt that on the next occasion I could do it myself.

During the course of my lessons, I was sometimes bewildered by conditions in the kitchen. Actually, there was no kitchen *per se*, no separate room with a sink or cooking range, only a small space in the rear of the temple building with a bucket of flaming coals for cooking and a bucket of water for washing pots. And the methods of Indian cooking were totally strange to me. They did everything in a simple, nonmechanized fashion—like cutting vegetables while squatting on the floor.

The shortage of space created a chaotic situation. Bengali ladies came in and out on errands, and workers moved around the kitchen on business unrelated to Prabhupāda's lunch. Understanding neither Bengali nor Hindi, I usually couldn't tell what people were doing, and I worried that the lunch would be delayed.

Piśimā seemed to be delaying also. Catching her attention and

pointing to my watch made no impression on her. I had to stand by and observe without any hope of changing things, even when I saw something I thought wasn't up to Prabhupāda's standard. Something about the use of water bewildered me, and in one of my entries into Prabhupāda's room, I made a derogatory remark for which I paid dearly. My tone was not flippant but again, anxiety-filled. I had thought I should inform him of the strange things going on.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," I began, "you say that the Indian culture is *śucī*, cleaner than America which is *mleccha*, but it appears to me that the kitchen here is dirty—"

"You mind your own business!" Prabhupāda said sharply. His words were like a slap and immediately brought me to my senses. There was no need for more discussion. I left his room and hurried back to the kitchen to get his lunch, realizing that I had fallen into mundane, pro-Western faultfinding. Why had I allowed myself to get unnecessarily worked up just because of some cultural differences? Prabhupāda wasn't concerned, so why should I be? I remembered running to him in confusion about how to handle guests. He had told me, "Everything is all right." Now he had said the same thing in a different way: mind your own business. Don't get on the mental plane of rejection and acceptance about temporary things. Don't identify with the body and mind, thinking, "I am an American." Just mind your own business. Serve your spiritual master and don't worry.

When I returned to his room, carrying his tray filled with little stainless steel cups containing the different preparations cooked by Piśimā, Prabhupāda was very patient and pleasant. He knew far better than I did that the material world is a chaotic place and that a devotee has to keep a cool and sober head. And he also knew, to a degree that I could not imagine, the soothing shelter of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

Sunshine was brightening his room, and birds were singing at his open window as I left Śrīla Prabhupāda to take his *prasādam*

in peace. Despite a cacophony of sounds from the streets—creaking rickshas, honking automobiles, and hawkers shouting for customers—Prabhupāda sat serenely, honoring *prasādam*. For myself, it had been a grueling session, overlooking the Indian ladies cooking while praying it would be ready on time. Now I stood outside Prabhupāda's door, relieved, reprimanded, and feeling myself the most fortunate devotee in the crowded temple.

The Gaura-pūrṇimā festival in Māyāpur was a mixture of difficulties and glorious successes. The main residential building was not completed or able to house the approximately four hundred devotees who arrived from all over the world. Many had to keep their luggage out on the veranda and sleep there at night. *Prasādam* was served on the same veranda, which created considerable discomfort. Most of the devotees were visiting India for the first time, and many became sick with dysentery and other diseases. Accepting the austerities philosophically, they reasoned that this was, after all, the first attempt at holding the festival; next year would be better.

And on the bright side, the gathering of devotees in 1974 was the making of spiritual history; adjusting to the ways and climate of India, many became deeply satisfied to be a part of it. For the first time the prediction of the *ācārya* Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura—that one day the *saṅkīrtana* movement of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu would spread to become a world religion, bringing Bengalis, Europeans, and Americans together in Māyāpur to chant "Jai Śacīnandana!" and the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*—was being fulfilled. Devotees thrilled to be in the holy *dhāma*, and they went out together, hundreds strong, on *parikrama* to visit the *tīrthas* connected with the *līlā* of Lord Caitanya. They bathed in the Ganges, took time to read Prabhupāda's books, shopped in the market—*mṛdaṅgas*, *karatālas*, deities, *dhōtīs*—for the needs of their temples back home. And best of all, everyone got to see Śrīla Prabhupāda daily in the temple room and hear him speak. This was also the first year that Śrīla Prabhupāda had requested his worldwide zonal secretaries, the

Governing Body Commission, to meet and make plans and resolutions for the next year's preaching.

I was again posted in a room next to Prabhupāda and responsible for his personal needs. When he rang his brass hand-bell, I was the one who came running out of one room, down the marble veranda, and into Prabhupāda's room to answer his requests, even if it only meant going to get a leading Godbrother whom Prabhupāda wanted to talk with. Since I was on call twenty-four hours a day, a special arrangement had to be made so that I could attend the G.B.C. meetings, which were to last two or three days. Nanda-kumāra, a former servant of Prabhupāda's, had shown up for the festival, and he volunteered for his old position during the days I would be attending the meetings.

One of the first items of business for the G.B.C. officers was the assignment of zones. A majority opinion, which I shared, was that I should relinquish my zonal responsibility since I could not tend to it while traveling constantly with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I had been the zonal secretary for Texas, Chicago, and other Midwestern cities and states when Śrīla Prabhupāda had called me to be his servant-secretary, and since that time I had hardly communicated with any of the temples in my zone. So I was relieved of that duty. They said I should remain as a G.B.C. member, but my portfolio was now as personal secretary to Śrīla Prabhupāda without a zone.

I felt some remorse to see my zonal responsibilities removed, since Śrīla Prabhupāda had previously written to me that they were very important. He had told me I should do as he was doing and travel to the temples in my zone, carefully tending to the spiritual standards and watching the financial stability. But now Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted me to be his servant, and I also identified myself with that service—as did my Godbrothers. Therefore the resolution was passed that I no longer had a zone.

But after the first day's G.B.C. meeting, when I returned to the room adjoining Prabhupāda's, I heard another amazing change, this one from Nanda-kumāra. He said that Prabhupāda had just agreed

that he, Nanda-kumāra, should return to his position as Prabhupāda's permanent servant. Nanda-kumāra had been the servant before Śrutakīrti and had traveled with Śrīla Prabhupāda through America and India from 1969 through 1970. He had worshiped a small set of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on Prabhupāda's behalf, wherever they went, and had been a competent cook and fellow traveler for Śrīla Prabhupāda. He had left because of a falldown with a woman and had had spiritual trouble ever since. For a while he had been breaking the regulative principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but now he had come to the Māyāpur festival to attempt a spiritual recovery.

And after one day as my temporary replacement, he had arranged to replace me for good. Or so he said. I went into Śrīla Prabhupāda along with Nanda-kumāra and asked if this were true. Prabhupāda explained that Nanda-kumāra had requested it and that he was agreeable, if I was. Śrīla Prabhupāda was never partial or political or sentimental in such matters. He wanted all his disciples to be happy and fully engaged, and he required that one of us be his servant. No one should be disappointed or rejected.

Nanda-kumāra spoke up and explained that he needed it for his spiritual survival, whereas I, he said, was fixed up and could resume my G.B.C. duties. Prabhupāda agreed that Nanda-kumāra was an expert servant, and I also consented to that. I felt somehow the victim of a fast move, but it was so transparent and unsneaky, that I could not resent Nanda-kumāra's motives. If he really needed it and Prabhupāda agreed, then of course I would agree also. I didn't want to fight it. Besides, I had been experiencing occasional mixed feelings, and restlessness as personal servant. Maybe this was Kṛṣṇa's way of moving me on. Somewhat abruptly, therefore, Nanda-kumāra replaced me as Prabhupāda's servant.

The next morning I woke in a different room, not adjoining Prabhupāda's but with several other *sannyāsīs*. At first I thought I was still Prabhupāda's servant and I should get up and prepare his medicine, but then I remembered. My feelings were again mixed,

but I couldn't help but take pleasure in associating with my Godbrothers, all of whom were eager preachers on Prabhupāda's behalf in different places around the world. There was Girirāja, Prabhupāda's loyal spiritual son who served him in Bombay; Tripurāri, who was very dear to Prabhupāda for leading the book distribution in America; and Jayādvaita, the personal editor of Prabhupāda's books. Certainly being in their company didn't make me feel I was no longer serving Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I suddenly remembered how Prabhupāda had written me in 1969 when he had visited our temple in Boston. I had desired to be his personal servant during his stay in Boston, but didn't get the chance, due to my other duties. Prabhupāda had written me later, "It does not matter that you did not personally tend to me in Boston; that is a formality. I want to see that all my disciples are engaged twenty-four hours in the service of the Lord. If one is engaged full-time in the service of the Lord, under my direction, that is my personal service." Every one of the hundreds of devotees gathered in Māyāpur were all personal servants of Prabhupāda, even if only one had the duties of massaging Prabhupāda's body and bringing him his meals.

Assuring myself in this way, I hurried down to the temple room to get a place near the altar so that I could see the Deities during *maṅgala-ārati*. I also led the singing of the prayers, *samsāra-dāvā*, and some of the devotees commented that I seemed extra enthusiastic. My friends asked me, "What are you going to do now?" and I said I wasn't yet sure. But my head was swimming with possibilities. I was thinking that I would like to return to the *brahmacārīs* I had been traveling with and continue that program of going from city to city. If the G.B.C. so decided, I could also take back my zone or another zone. My thoughts thus raced around the world, considering the infinite possibilities of service to Śrīla Prabhupāda in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and by the time Śrīla Prabhupāda came out for his walk, I was feeling bouncy and almost heady from my new "freedom." Standing with my *sannyāsī* Godbrothers as we held our

daṇḍas, I prepared to follow and hear Śrīla Prabhupāda in his walk through the fields. But when I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda's new servant, walking closely by Prabhupāda's side and carrying Prabhupāda's *cādar* draped over his arm, I suddenly regretted that I was not in that position. The same categorical change, which had up to now impressed me in terms of its freedom, now hit me as a loss of intimacy. I was no longer the one and only devotee who was always physically close to Prabhupāda; I was now one of many God-brothers who trailed behind Prabhupāda, trying to get close enough to hear his words. At one point when Prabhupāda stopped, it was to Nanda-kumāra he turned for assistance in putting on his *cādar*, and I regretted that it was not I who had the privilege to perform that tender gesture. Only yesterday I had been Prabhupāda's servant, and now I wondered if he even noticed me.

From a unique vantage point, I saw the benefits and shortcomings of both positions. The regular *sannyāsī* can expect to have his own room, his own set of Prabhupāda's books, his own belongings, and his own party of men to work with. But as Prabhupāda's servant one must do everything in the position of a menial helper. Being Prabhupāda's servant, one cannot engage directly in leading many men; he has to serve always. And yet his service is most enviable since he is serving the greatest. The personal servant remains completely subordinate and always takes the back seat. He does not go out preaching on his own, and he is also liable to be constantly chastised and exposed by Prabhupāda for his neophyte incompetence. But if he is advanced enough to endure the *guru's* pummeling of his false ego, then he can experience the greatest advantage of being personally trained by the spiritual master.

During Prabhupāda's morning walk, I particularly experienced the feelings of loss, but during his lecture in the temple I was able to listen attentively and felt myself purified of all misconceptions. Certainly I was Prabhupāda's intimate disciple as long as I remained submissive to his order. I myself had not brought about my removal as his servant. It had somehow come to pass, and I would accept

it as Kṛṣṇa's and Prabhupāda's arrangement. I would take up whatever my new service might be, not in a spirit of enjoying or becoming independent but trying to see myself as the servant of my spiritual master.

When the G.B.C. meetings reconvened that day, I formally announced how Prabhupāda had taken on Nanda-kumāra as his personal servant. I asked to be reinstated in my former G.B.C. zone. The G.B.C. body considered my request and agreed that I should take on my full portfolio as G.B.C. secretary. There was also some discussion that as a *sannyāsī* I should consider traveling around the United States and placing Prabhupāda's books in libraries. But this was as yet not a clear direction. I would go back to America, take up my former duties and then see what I could do.

It was after the second day of G.B.C. meetings that a devotee messenger came up to me and said that Prabhupāda wanted to see me. As I approached his room, I looked into the servant's room and Nanda-kumāra wasn't there. Neither was he in Prabhupāda's room. Prabhupāda was there with a few senior disciples. He appeared to me like a great king-*ācārya*, sitting simply in his room in *sannyāsī* garments, while hundreds of his disciples were gathered just to be with him and worship him in Māyāpur. He was a powerful spiritual leader in every sense, and yet he behaved humbly and lived simply.

I didn't know why Prabhupāda had called me. I had already been through many changes since arriving in Māyāpur, but like his other disciples I just wanted to surrender to his order. The satisfaction of being called by him, and the anticipation, thinking, "He will ask me something and whatever it is I will do it, and that is my life," is indescribable by me, but it is the very life-substance of the disciple.

"Nanda-kumāra is too restless," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. He had been discussing it with the other devotees. One of them said, "Prabhupāda was ringing his bell, but Nanda-kumāra wasn't there." Nanda had run into the same thing I had in his attempt to cook

Prabhupāda's lunch—Indian ladies in the kitchen. He couldn't even get a knife or vegetables and couldn't communicate to the women, who spoke no English. That incident, in addition to a general spiritual weakness, convinced Nanda that he wasn't ready to be personal servant again, not now. The consensus was that I should return, and I said that I would.

At this point I couldn't think whether being servant was more favorable or less favorable than something else. Prabhupāda was personally present, and the only question was to do as he wanted, to make it convenient for him. It was not so much a test of my surrender to servant's duties as it was a test of my willingness to go back and forth on Prabhupāda's command. There is a story that a spiritual master told his disciple, "Pick up that stick," but when the disciple went to do it the *guru* said, "No! Don't pick it up—it is a snake." And when the disciple stopped picking it up, the *guru* added, "No, it is a stick, pick it up," —and the disciple obeyed.

Later that evening, I stood at the rail of the veranda with Nanda-kumāra, within bell-ringing range of Prabhupāda's room. Nanda had admitted he couldn't do the servant's task, but now he gave me some advice. I had also admitted to him that in the interim period I had partly felt relief and new freedom to take up preaching duties beyond those of a personal servant.

"I think you should stay Prabhupāda's secretary as long as possible," said Nanda-kumāra. "Prabhupāda may be with us in this world say for another ten years only. After that, we are still young and we have the whole rest of our lives to go out and preach. But as long as he is here, he is the real preacher and to be with him is the best training." What he said sounded wise, even if he wasn't able to follow the advice himself. "Just dedicate yourself to serving Prabhupāda for ten years," said Nanda, "and then you can go and preach. Just think of the benefit you will gain which you will never be able to gain later." Nanda's reasoning, with the almost cold calculations about Prabhupāda's remaining ten years, made

sense to me. Even if my concern was not to miss out on the action of preaching and responsibility in ISKCON, what better way to be trained than to assist the greatest of all preachers and personally serve him? Hadn't Īśvara Purī become qualified to be the *guru* of Lord Caitanya because of his menial service to his (Īśvara Purī's) *guru*, Mādhavendra Purī?

So I was back as Prabhupāda's personal secretary-servant. The next day, at the last session of the G.B.C. meetings, I again relinquished my duties in the Midwest zone.

FIVE

Prabhupāda was soon traveling again, with me in the side seat, to Calcutta, to New Delhi, back to Vṛndāvana, and then to Bombay. Those who know something of Prabhupāda's life from their personal experience or from the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* know that Bombay was the scene of many struggles for him, as he fought to establish a grand temple and ISKCON hotel at Hare Krishna Land. There was court litigation, threats from the landlord, delays from the municipality, and even an attack and demolition of his first temple. Some of the devotees called Bombay "New Kurukṣetra" because of the obstacles Prabhupāda confronted there. But for the period I am describing, April through May 1974, Śrīla Prabhupāda's time in Bombay was rather uneventful. It was an in between period with no intense conflict. As he wrote in one letter during this time, "In Bombay we are meeting the opposition peacefully and I hope things will come out successfully."

But for me personally, as Prabhupāda's servant and disciple, this was a soul-searching period.

During the more than two months Prabhupāda stayed in Bombay, the pace got slow and the weather got hot. As always, however, wherever Prabhupāda was, wonderful things happened daily. For example, his walks on Juhu Beach were, for me, a perfection of absorption in Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy. He simply wouldn't tire, either in walking or in expounding *sāstra* and brilliantly debating against the nonbelievers. Even when I got sick, I still went on the walks. And they were real walks—Prabhupāda in his canvas shoes stepping in the soft, semi-wet sand, leaving tracks for several miles, and those of us who could last it (often devotees would drop out, exhausted) moved behind him along a border of sky and ocean.

After the morning walks, Prabhupāda would take a light breakfast of fruits and then sit at his desk, sometimes closing his eyes while

pleasant breezes and morning sunshine entered his room. I felt that he was using this Bombay stop to gain a little strength, after traveling and working so hard. I was glad to see him resting, since he usually rested only about four hours in twenty-four. I *preferred* to see Prabhupāda not giving extra lectures and meeting guests all day. The main thing, especially at his age, was to keep good health and continue his writing. So this occasional resting in the morning seemed appropriate.

For me, Prabhupāda's daily massage was the high point of the day. It was supposed to begin at eleven-fifteen in the morning, but sometimes he would be talking with guests at that time.

In that case, I would put on my *gamchā* and sit conspicuously in his audience, hoping that they would understand that it was time for his massage. Sometimes I even said, "Prabhupāda, it is time for your massage." He would sometimes ignore me, or sometimes take the hint and manage to have the audience depart. I was always concerned that he start his massage on time, otherwise his lunch would be late, and his whole afternoon schedule would be off.

He would put on his *gamchā* and sit on the veranda floor in the late morning sunshine. I would rub mustard seed oil over his body, starting with the top of his head, and he would relax, often with half-closed eyes, and allow his body to rock slightly with the movements of my massaging. It was lush in Bombay, and while sitting, Prabhupāda could see the tops of the coconut trees against the blue sky. There were nice tropical breezes, and Prabhupāda called it a paradise. "Have you ever seen such a lush place?" he asked, and he would speak of many things, but not as constantly as on the morning walk.

Once he asked me how many hippies were in America and what they did. He would be silent for long periods and then suddenly ask something that was on his mind. Once he suddenly said, "I am not anxious to go to Goloka Vṛndāvana. I just want to expose

all these rascals who pretend to be *yogīs* and *svāmīs*." Another time he suddenly asked, "Where in the world can I go where there will be no visitors and I can simply be alone to write my books?" Sometimes an intimate devotee like Girirāja would come in, and Prabhupāda would forget that I was massaging. Once I went on massaging his back for forty-five minutes while he talked with Girirāja. Prabhupāda began one conversation with him saying, "Girirāja you are the leader here. You should dress more nicely and respectably. But there is a saying that if one is a leader it doesn't matter how he dresses; he will still be known as a leader." All these exchanges, which I witnessed from the position of a mostly silent masseur, were indescribably delightful.

For me, something as ordinary as sleeping at night was special, because I was only a few feet away from Śrīla Prabhupāda. He slept in a bed under his mosquito net, and I was under another mosquito net out on the veranda. I would regularly hear him rise at 1 or 2 A.M. and hear his voice dictating the purports. I never tired of that, and in fact I never tired of anything about Śrīla Prabhupāda. No matter how close I lived with him, I never saw him do anything that would indicate that he was anything but a pure devotee, constantly and always on the highest level.

I was no longer cooking, but I would help Prabhupāda's Bombay cook, Pālikā, cut up fruit for His Divine Grace every morning. We were able to get a nice assortment of fresh fruits—watermelons, papayas, bananas, apples, *kityus*—and different kinds of cashews and other nuts. People were always bringing sweets also, and sometimes Prabhupāda would eat some chuddy noodles. That was breakfast.

For lunch, Pālikā would cook *shukta*, which Prabhupāda was regularly taking. Sometimes in the evenings he would take milk and perhaps a sweet, or sometimes he asked me to cook something simple like peanuts. One evening he asked me to make eggplant *pooki*. While I was frying the sliced eggplant in *ghee*, Prabhupāda

came into the kitchen, watched what I was doing, and said, "Actually, I am not hungry, but I am just doing this to teach you how to cook." And when I brought in the eggplant along with a cup of milk, he said, "Think how busy Kṛṣṇa is. He is in the heart of every living entity." Living with Prabhupāda meant that at any moment, you could expect for no apparent or official reason, he would suddenly be speaking of Kṛṣṇa.

"Yes," I responded, "if an ordinary person is too busy, he gets confused."

Prabhupāda laughed. "And yet," he said, "Kṛṣṇa is with Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* and simultaneously with His queens in Dvārakā. This is God."

Previously I said that Prabhupāda's two-month stay in Bombay was not eventful, but that is only an external consideration. Prabhupāda's life was always, minute by minute, filled with the ecstasy of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even a dull servant could catch some of it, as the sunshine reflects even in a pool of dirty water.

Yet sometimes I returned to thinking whether another service—one with more active preaching on his behalf—might be more satisfying and useful for me. I wondered whether Prabhupāda would approve. He had easily enough accepted a replacement for me when Nanda-kumāra had stepped forward in Māyāpur, so maybe it wasn't a bad idea. But if Prabhupāda wanted me to be his personal servant, then to request change would be wrong. I wondered if I should ask him, or if even thinking about it was wrong. I had been present once in Calcutta when a boy who had been there three years asked Śrīla Prabhupāda if he could change and preach in the West. Prabhupāda had said, yes, a change in preaching field was all right, "as long as it is not scandalous." So that was the point. Serving the *ācārya* had to be according to his desires and the needs of his mission. Change was possible and sometimes healthy. But if I wanted to change, and he was not pleased, *then* it would be scandalous.

In my attempt to carefully evaluate what was best, I took to writing things down in a diary. On April 7, I wrote as follows:

As *parivrajakacaryas*, *sannyasis* struggle to find the best preaching program. Kṛṣṇa awards them intelligence as they surrender and stay out on traveling *sankirtana*, trying always to best utilize their time for reaching people and giving them Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is a great taste and one feels he pleases the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa while in the field that way. But the main thing is to be attached to the feet of the *guru*. Such preaching makes one attached with firm grip to *guru's* instructions. It is not the preaching *per se* but the preaching attached to *guru*. By *guru's* blessings the preaching becomes purified, and the *sannyasi* becomes more and more enlivened in carrying out the *guru's* orders.

In this way, I was simultaneously yearning to go travel and preach and yet cautiously aware that I was responsible, as servant and secretary, for important services to Prabhupāda.

One morning in Bombay, while I was sitting chanting silent *japa* in Prabhupāda's back room and Śrīla Prabhupāda was reading one of his books in the front room, his disciple Pañcadraviḍa Swami came to visit him. Pañcadraviḍa Mahārāja had been preaching in South India, and after visiting Prabhupāda for a few days, he was about to set off again on another tour to the South. Prabhupāda gave him encouraging words and blessings. He told him that the mission of the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement is to turn a section of the population into ideal men. Prabhupāda said we cannot expect everyone to join.

"If by this way or that way," said Prabhupāda, "you can bring one person to Kṛṣṇa, He is very pleased to have one of His sons returned." Pañcadraviḍa Mahārāja asked how he could prepare himself to preach against South Indian *paṇḍitas* who knew the *śāstras* thoroughly. Prabhupāda replied that if he could just memorize

thirty of the key verses of *Bhagavad-gītā*, he would be able to defeat Māyāvādī arguments. Prabhupāda also emphasized that Pañcadraviḍa Mahārāja should preach on the basis of the *varṇāśrama-dharma*, explaining that in order for society to be sane it should be organized according to four orders and classes.

Hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda give his *sannyāsī* disciple impetus to go and preach, I again felt the desire to leave my secretarial duties and go preaching in the U.S. colleges. I recalled how I had been doing that service formerly, and I vowed that if given another chance I would try harder. But then I checked myself. Why should I be thinking of any other service except that assigned to me? After Pañcadraviḍa Mahārāja left, I went back to chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and praying to Kṛṣṇa to treat me as he liked for my betterment. To insist on a certain situation in devotional service would be sense gratification, not *bhakti*.

Since these deliberations were on my mind, I often found relevant passages in my reading that brought the issue into focus. In the mornings, for example, Prabhupāda had asked different devotees to read out loud from the *Kṛṣṇa* book while he walked, and one of the passages stood out in my mind. We had been reading about Kṛṣṇa stealing the clothes of the unmarried *gopī* girls, and Śrīla Prabhupāda had commented that they would do whatever Kṛṣṇa asked. "That is love," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "You can do whatever you want and still I love you. That is how Lord Caitanya prayed. Otherwise, it becomes a business exchange."

I particularly took note of passages praising unalloyed surrender to the *guru*. Often I engaged in dialogues with myself, sometimes speaking in favor of the desire to go and preach and sometimes admonishing myself for considering anything except the duties of personal servant. But to speak back and forth to myself was not conclusive. Since I could not *forget* the idea of doing another service, I realized that sooner or later I would have to bring my doubts before Śrīla Prabhupāda.

At this time Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami came to Prabhupāda and

asked permission to leave his assignment as G.B.C. for India (which he had been executing for four years) to go traveling and preaching in America. His friend Viṣṇujana Swami had been staying with him in Bombay and had told him how great the preaching was in America. Viṣṇujana suggested they go traveling together in a bus, holding festivals, distributing books, and recruiting devotees. Prabhupāda seemed reluctant at first, but then agreed and gave permission. He even said, "Yes, we can always pay a manager, but preaching is a matter of realization."

Seeing Tamāla Kṛṣṇa get permission impelled my own thinking in that direction. On several occasions I was present when Tamāla Kṛṣṇa spoke to Prabhupāda about the plans to preach in America.

"Without preaching," said Prabhupāda, "ISKCON will become rubbish. The management will be at our fingers-end if the devotees simply follow the rules, chanting, and taking *prasādam*. Preaching is first. Yes, it is good if the presidents and G.B.C.'s switch around sometimes." Another time I was present with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa when Prabhupāda talked about how he left his home and went preaching.

"I was always thinking," said Prabhupāda, "how I could benefit everyone. As the *Bhagavad-gītā* says, *sarva-bhūtānam*. Unless one has come to this realization, how can he be a representative of God? I never had any national or humanitarian concerns, but concern for all living entities. Even at home as a householder I was preaching and people were coming. But my family members were upstairs taking tea. I was very angry with them. I told my wife, 'You either give up tea, or lose your husband.' She thought that I was joking. But I was determined and took *sannyāsa*. The family took it as a great shock. But now I am fully satisfied."

"It is our good fortune," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "that you had this disagreement with your wife and that she chose tea instead of you. Because now we are all saved." Prabhupāda appeared like he was going to say more about his family, but then he said, "I do not care to talk about them anymore."

"Go and preach and remain active," Prabhupāda told us, "and

when you are old enough you can go and sit down in Māyāpur and simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

"But Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "What does 'old enough' mean?"

Prabhupāda said, "That has to be judged by the individual. As for myself, I am not so old."

"Then we also, Śrīla Prabhupāda," I said, "will follow your example and never say we are old enough to stop preaching."

One time, when Tamāla Kṛṣṇa left the room and I was alone with Prabhupāda, he continued speaking about his own preaching. "When I went to New York," he said, "I simply sat down with a small drum. Many were dancing. Were you there? I was working hard then. Those were happy days. Three hours chanting in the park, then back to the temple for two hours. There was a bench in the kitchen, and I used to sit on it and watch Second Avenue at night. I couldn't sleep." Prabhupāda went on to describe the different devotees at 26 Second Avenue, and he remembered the feasts and how many people were coming. He remembered how on Saturday nights all the devotees helped prepare for the feast. "Those were happy days," he repeated.

All these talks about preaching were very enlivening, but they made me also want to preach. I went and spoke with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa in his hut.

"I think I would also like to go and preach in America," I said. "I could start up my own traveling party again and go town to town. What do you think? Sometimes I feel someone else could do the simple things I do here."

"But I don't know what Prabhupāda would say," he replied. "Anyway, the main thing is attachment to the spiritual master. And that can also be gained as servant or secretary. I think if you ever feel that it's not good for you, you can ask Prabhupāda to release you for preaching. But as long as you feel strong by attending him, writing his letters, writing for *Back to Godhead*, then it is best to

do what Prabhupāda has asked you to do. Even if it's not preaching, it's an important service."

For the time being, these words dissuaded me from even asking Śrīla Prabhupāda.

After a few weeks in Bombay, Śrīla Prabhupāda received a letter from Bhagavān dāsa, his G.B.C. man in Southern Europe, inviting Prabhupāda to tour Europe in May. Bhagavān outlined how Śrīla Prabhupāda could fly first to Rome, then go to Geneva, Paris, and up to Germany. As I read the letter out loud to him, Prabhupāda immediately agreed. I was also enlivened, but I asked, "What about your expressed desire, Śrīla Prabhupāda, to go somewhere where there will be no visitors so you can just write? This European program sounds like just the opposite."

Prabhupāda laughed. "That will not be possible for me in this lifetime," he said. "Better I keep traveling and die on the battlefield. For a warrior, it is glorious to die on the battlefield, isn't it?"

Within a week, other invitations arrived—to attend Ratha-yātrās in Australia and the United States. Prabhupāda accepted them all, and we planned an itinerary, beginning after a two-month stay in Bombay, which would take us on a fast-paced tour through Europe, then to Melbourne, then all the way to Chicago via Hawaii, then to San Francisco, back to Los Angeles, and back to India. Prabhupāda also said that before leaving India he would like to visit Hyderabad, and he spoke with interest of traveling from Hyderabad to the famous temple of Lord Viṣṇu as Vyenkaṭeśvara, in Tirupati, South India.

As secretary I had to assist in making the tour a practical reality. I at once began writing letters to the temples involved, consulting with the airlines to set up dates of arrival and departure, and conferring with Śrīla Prabhupāda as to where he expected to

stay and what he would do in each place. It was a flurry of new engagement for me, and if I was interested in travel, this should have been enough to give me my fill.

In the meantime, life with Śrīla Prabhupāda in Bombay went on as usual. He began sitting on the roof of the building in the early evening. My responsibility was to bring up his bolster pillows and a mattress so he could sit comfortably and speak with selected guests. Sometimes no one would come, and he would sit and chant *japa* as the evening became dark. While Prabhupāda was on the roof, I would set up his bed with the mosquito netting, tying the cords to different fixtures in four corners of the room and firmly tucking the net in under his mattress. I would also set up my own mosquito netting on the veranda, prepare Prabhupāda's writing desk with another large, tentlike net for when he rose to dictate, and then join Prabhupāda on the roof. At these early evening sessions, he liked to hear news of our upcoming traveling, and I would sometimes save business matters or inquiries from devotees to present to him then.

Girirāja and other stalwarts of the ISKCON Bombay project would also sometimes gather or at least stop by briefly to see Prabhupāda while he sat on the roof. Prabhupāda was always ready to hear the latest intrigues in the drawn-out struggle to get official permission from the city and the police for construction at Hare Krishna Land. Since Prabhupāda's apartment was in the middle of the tenement buildings, we would hear the children playing below, and he would sometimes comment how he wished that they could all become devotees. Prabhupāda said he would like to propose to the tenants that they could all live on our land rent-free if only they would become devotees, attend the temple programs, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and follow the regulative principles.

"But they will not do it, I know," said Prabhupāda. "They will prefer to travel two hours into Bombay city to work all day for a few rupees, and then travel two hours back in the traffic jam, just so that they can be free to smoke, eat a little piece of meat

or fish, and go to the cinema. They would rather work hard like asses than become a devotee and go back to Godhead."

Another time, there was a bus and truck strike, and food supplies stopped coming into Bombay. After a week, many citizens were finding it difficult to obtain food, but the devotees were somehow still able to provide for the Deities, Rādhā-Rāsavihārī, and for themselves. Prabhupāda remarked that this was the mercy of Kṛṣṇa.

"But even if we could not get any food," he said, "We would take the opportunity to simply sit down and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, that's all."

As Prabhupāda's secretary-servant, I appeared to everyone to be content and occupied. But it didn't take much for me to keep the flame going in my restless meditation about going to preach versus staying back as servant. Through his correspondence, his lectures, and his room and roof *darśanas*, Prabhupāda continued to urge his disciples and all listeners to take up the outgoing preaching spirit. As the typist of his letters, I was regularly in contact with this urging.

To Dayānanda in Dallas he wrote, "It is especially nice to hear that the boys are becoming first-class preachers; that is needed. Without preaching our institution becomes all rubbish." To devotees in England he wrote, "Go on printing and distributing as many books as possible; this is your real work and your personal success. I am enclosing the names of thirteen new disciples recommended. This is a result of our preaching propaganda, when our family members increase." To Pāñcaratna in New York he wrote, "Your list of achievements by college course, Yoga Club, and programs in general is very impressive, particularly that you have a regular four-credit college course at Fordham University wherein the students are required to read some of my books." To Haribasārī in Washington State he wrote, "I am very indebted to all of you for your untiring efforts to see that every man and woman in America gets one of my books." To Balavanta in Atlanta he wrote, "If anywhere they will take seriously the principles of *Bhagavad-*

— *gita As It Is*, that is America." And to Śrī Govinda dāsa in Chicago he wrote, "When I came to America in the beginning, I began to expand it and it is now going on and there is no question of it stopping, so long as we are sincere. Therefore go on with your lifetime plans making secure and distributing of books. There is no cessation. This movement is eternal."

I wanted to go out and preach. I couldn't help myself from thinking of it and desiring it. Sometimes I thought, "I am sure that with suitable arrangements and a replacement, Śrīla Prabhupāda would not be sorry to have me go and preach." But then I thought, "Why am I not content to remain with Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee? This is offensive!" I remembered what Nanda-kumāra had said about staying with Prabhupāda as his servant for ten years and then going to preach. I was getting to the point where I could always bring up a rationalization for my going to preach—and then follow it with a reason or example to prove why I should not go. I recalled that when Guru dāsa, the temple president of Vṛndāvana, was massaging Prabhupāda one day and expressing how much he would like to be Prabhupāda's servant, Prabhupāda had scoffed at the thought. "This smearing oil is not important," Prabhupāda had said. "Anyone can do this. You have more important work." But then, while reading *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, I came upon an account of how Svarūpa Dāmodara and Raghunātha Gosvāmī were engaged in the personal service of Lord Caitanya: "This confidential service was the personal care of the Lord. Svarūpa Dāmodara, acting as His secretary, attended to the Lord's baths, meals, rest and massages, and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī assisted him."

On one hand, Prabhupāda's letters and talks abounded with exhortations to go out and preach, and yet as I read his books, I kept finding passages which reinforced the viewpoint that it was best not to ask for anything, but to serve silently.

I discovered the following in the *Kṛṣṇa* book:

"My dear Lord, You have kindly asked me what You can do for me. In answer to this I simply request that I may not forget

Your lotus feet at any time. I do not care where I may be, but I pray that I may be allowed to constantly remember Your lotus feet." The benediction which the sage Nārada asked of the Lord was the ideal prayer of all pure devotees. A pure devotee never asks for any kind of material or spiritual benediction from the Lord, but his only prayer is that he may not forget the lotus feet of the Lord.

I tried to pin down my back-and-forth mind by writing in my diary. While writing an entry, I would sometimes succeed in reaching a conclusion:

I have become a hearer rather than a preacher. So let me do it. Let me thoroughly absorb the message from the lips of my spiritual master. Not just the formal lectures but everything he says and does. Let me not become lax in my duties, for that would be contempt by familiarity. Let me serve and hear and that will be my perfection. I should not be agitated that I am being kept by my *guru's* side as his constant companion. When *guru* and Kṛṣṇa want me to go out and preach, they will send me out. "A dumb man can speak like a great orator." I should not think I am losing time by hearing and staying by Śrīla Prabhupada! Take the benefit; become pure by personal association. Be careful in secretarial duties and be thankful you are protected.

But in another mood, I drew myself a picture of a preaching life:

As one preaches continually to nondevotees, discusses the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness with devotees, reads, writes, chants, and does not become over-involved in business management, a potency develops. He becomes immersed in these activities more than someone who is not so constantly preaching. This I see as the glory of *sannyasa*. Taking advantage of the privilege to preach, he trains his tongue to speak only of Kṛṣṇa. As Prabhupada often explains, he travels all over the world to spread the message of *Bhagavad-gita*. Austerity, cleanliness,

regulated following of principles, outer preaching programs to distribute Kṛṣṇa's mercy—in battle against Mayavadis and atheists, jolly in spiritual identity, he represents his spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa.

In clearer moments I could see that there was nothing inherently wrong with either traveling and preaching or being the secretary-servant. The real point was *what did Śrīla Prabhupāda want?* Finally, I committed myself to asking him for permission. Otherwise, my condition would only get worse. I had already caught myself thinking that my duties were not important. Although there was a risk in asking Prabhupāda, I knew I had to take it. I had to hear it from him, as Arjuna had inquired from Kṛṣṇa, "This is my doubt, O Kṛṣṇa. I ask You to dispel it completely. But for Yourself, no one is to be found who can destroy this doubt." I decided to ask Prabhupāda at the first opportunity.

But that was not so easy. My habit was to approach Prabhupāda in a mood of awe and reverence. I rarely went into his room un-called for. I was aware that I had special access to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I did not like to take advantage of it. I was placed close to Prabhupāda not so that I could ask him *my* questions but so that I could serve him. Certainly this question was important to me, but unless I could ask the question as a form of rendering service, I did not want to take his time. Moreover, even from the viewpoint of my self-interest, I had to choose the right time to approach him. It could not be done in the brief space before he took *prasādam* or during the time when he dictated letters, since at those times he might be prone to deal with it very quickly. Nor should I approach him if it meant interrupting him from a grave, solitary mood. Days went by, therefore, before I found the opportunity. I continued my service, and sometimes spoke alone with Prabhupāda or asked him questions, but not the big question that was on my mind.

One evening I thought to ask him when he came down from

his *darśana* on the roof. We were alone in his room, and Prabhupāda began speaking to me.

"The *sannyāsīs* should read and preach all over the world," he said. "People speak English everywhere, so defeat these rascals. There is immense field of work all over the world." I wanted to ask then and there, but somehow I couldn't, and so I asked about something else instead.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda, in addition to my other duties, should I study your books?"

"How else will you progress?" said Prabhupāda. Although he spoke brusquely, it was a joy to hear. "You have to have a clear conception of *siddhānta*. People will come and you'll have to defend."

On another occasion, I went with Prabhupāda to the house of his friend, Mr. Mahadevia. While giving Prabhupāda his massage there, I prepared myself to ask the question, but before I could, Prabhupāda began speaking angrily about the philosophy of *daridrā-nārāyaṇa*.

"They say that to serve the poor is to worship God," said Prabhupāda. "They take the actual worship of Nārāyaṇa as something fictitious and apply the name "Nārāyaṇa" to the poor man. Nowhere is this stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. But if every man is Nārāyaṇa, then why not the animals? If they want to serve the common man and call that service to God, then they should not kill the goats or cows."

Prabhupāda's forceful speaking caught my full attention, and I put my question aside.

"Our objection," he said, "is not that they serve the poor, but that they bring Nārāyaṇa into it. Nārāyaṇa is in the spiritual world. *Daridrā* is in the material. Don't mix them. It is a great insult to Nārāyaṇa. Moreover, they are not even serving *daridrā*. They say that the devotee is wasting his time and money worshiping the Deity when there are so many poor. But we are feeding the poor—distributing *prasādam*."

While engaged in the vigorous effort of massaging Prabhupāda,

I also took up the voice of opposition to his argument. Prabhupāda was well-acquainted with my "opposing views," and he welcomed them, as fuel to his fiery preaching.

"But they charge that we do not feed enough people," I said, "and they say that we should give employment also."

"But that we do," said Prabhupāda, "We have about one hundred centers and thousands of students. We feed and employ."

"But they say we will not help *daridrā*," I said, "unless he joins our religion."

"But then take it even materially," said Prabhupāda. "To stop intoxication and meat-eating as we are doing is good for the health."

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," I continued, "when I was working with the Welfare Department in New York City, I learned that the poor were actually cheating, taking intoxication with whatever money was given to them."

"Actually the collection in the name of material welfare is a great hoax," said Prabhupāda. "Usually the people never get the money collected in their name. I knew personally of a political worker who was being trusted with the distribution of powdered milk donated from abroad. The man used to give a token amount to the school, one or two pots, pay the headmaster, and sell the rest to the milkman in Vṛndāvana."

At times like this, even I was not crazy enough to ask permission to leave my duties as Prabhupāda's personal servant.

Most of the time I spent with Śrīla Prabhupāda was in the course of a duty that didn't allow for the separate discussion I had in mind. Devotees phoned or approached me with questions to ask Prabhupāda, and so it was their questions, rather than my big one, that I offered for Prabhupāda's consideration.

"Prabhupāda, the devotees want to know," I asked, "if they might manufacture incense burners in India."

Prabhupāda replied, "No, they can't manage anything, not even washing their own clothing. Because formerly, as hippies, they gave up all responsibility, they still do not know how to be responsi-

ble. So many American boys and girls are like that. Hippies. America's position is not good."

"The devotees here in Bombay want to know what is the best way to serve *prasādam* in the temple."

"The best way," said Prabhupāda, "is in batches of twelve. Twelve sit down, and they are served hot fresh rice, *dāl*, *capātis*, and when they are finished they wash, and another twelve sit down. That way everything is hot and fresh. It is nutritious and palatable. Eat substantially and keep your health, but not voraciously."

Then I came down with hepatitis. Paṇḍitji had come down with it a week before me, and he would regularly talk about it with Śrīla Prabhupāda, telling him about his symptoms, his special diet, and medicine. One day Paṇḍitji approached His Divine Grace and told him he was now passing white stool.

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "I also sometimes have symptoms, but I don't say anything about it. Sometimes I see the stool is white, and I think, 'This is going on.' Then it will again be reddish. Just like now I am feeling some swollen condition in my foot. But I don't talk about it. The Vaiṣṇava avoids too much emphasis on his body." With this as a warning, I tried not to dwell on my disease or allow it to cause inconvenience to Prabhupāda. But when Prabhupāda heard about it, he recommended I take sugar cane juice and also *kerela*. He said maybe my illness was due to overwork. I couldn't figure out why Prabhupāda said that I was overworking, since my workload in Bombay had become light. Of course, my mind was overworking with its pro-and-con deliberations, but I wasn't sure whether he was referring to that.

Finally, one morning after Prabhupāda's breakfast I dragged myself with trepidation into his room. He was alone, and it seemed like a good time. "Now or never," I thought to myself and launched into my question. As I began to speak, I had the eerie sensation of hearing my own voice, which sounded weak as if from a distance.

"Prabhupāda, I was thinking that I would like to change my service and go preach in America."

Prabhupāda was displeased. *That* was immediately clear.

"This is a concoction," he said sternly. "Preaching means to be fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service in any capacity. Don't be like that Śrīmatī, jumping, jumping." Prabhupāda's allusion was to a lady devotee who had written him recently, asking for a change in her designated service. She had been trained up as an artist in making diorama dolls, which was very pleasing to Prabhupāda, but in her latest letter she suggested that she give up that service and do something else. It was a crushing blow to be grouped in with her as a whimsical jumper. But that is the right of the spiritual master, and it was true.

I attempted a counter argument, but I was like a scrap of paper against a strong wind. I had no hope or even desire to change Prabhupāda's decision, but since I had invested so much energy in the idea, I thought I should at least go through the motions and receive his full, merciful reprimand so that I would be completely certain. But even to me, my case seemed ridiculous.

"I want to preach more. I don't get many opportunities," I said.

"A real preacher preaches everywhere," said Prabhupāda. "You can preach here in the temple in the evening instead of me. It will be a great relief for me."

"Well, that wouldn't be a relief for anyone else," I said, wincing at the suggestion that I should replace Prabhupāda as the preacher. Prabhupāda had a few more choice words, and then I said that I was sorry and that I could see that he was right.

And so I had the answer to my long-awaited question. Retiring to the veranda in a devastated condition, I began my usual morning duties by typing Prabhupāda's letters. I steadily typed out about six letters, as if I were in a normal state of mind. But then I wrote a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda and placed it at the top of the pile of letters. I then approached Śrīla Prabhupāda for his massage, as usual. He didn't mention anything about my disastrous question, nor did I bring it up again. In fact, he was silent for the entire massage. Later, after he had taken his lunch and gone to rest

in bed, I walked into Prabhupāda's front room and picked up the stack of letters. My own letter was still on top, and I read it again to myself.

Dear Srila Prabhupada,

Please accept my humble obeisances. I am very ashamed for the whimsical way I spoke to you this morning, saying I was not enthusiastic from "not preaching."

But your words have saved me. I realize real preaching is to be engaged in your service in any capacity.

Actually I am very happy with my present duties, and I do not wish to have anything changed. I was simply under the influence of *maya* when I spoke.

Now I am only afraid you will think I am whimsical and unsteady. I only wish to remain

Your servant,
Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Then I noticed Prabhupāda had hand written something, a short note, in the upper right-hand margin of the page.

Thank you very much.
May Kṛṣṇa save you from
calamities. You are
very pure.

I had written my letter with genuine shame and fear, thinking, "What have I done!" I had begged forgiveness. As I wrote I wanted more than anything that Prabhupāda keep me in my service as his secretary-servant. Perhaps it was presumptuous of me as his servant to write such a letter, but at the time I was beyond my usual relationship of passive awe and reverence. I was desperate to express myself to Prabhupāda in a mood other than the whimsical one in which I had asked my foolish question. I was aggressively anxious. I had to know his reply.

Prabhupāda's note is a great personal treasure in my life. I was not sure exactly what it meant, except that it was his kindness and that he was accepting me despite my faults. Why he wrote, "Thank you very much" is inconceivable. When he wrote, "May Kṛṣṇa save you from calamities," I took it to mean that this event was one calamity and that there would be more. As a conditioned soul within the material universe, I would be subject to many calamities from the fourfold and threefold miseries, but Śrīla Prabhupāda, as my spiritual master, was praying to Kṛṣṇa that I would be saved. From Prabhupāda's teachings I knew this to mean that I should always remember Kṛṣṇa and never forget Him, through all trials and calamities. And this was Prabhupāda's assurance to me of his well-wishing protection. Kṛṣṇa is everyone's protector, and Śrīla Prabhupāda is the protector of all his disciples. When he wrote, "You are very pure," I took it to mean, "You are a rascal for whimsically desiring to jump from your duty, but now that I have corrected you and you have written this letter of sincere apology, which I accept, I consider you a simple, foolish disciple. You have submitted to your spiritual master, so you are rectified; you are pure."

Nothing more was said of the exchanges, and I applied myself to the duties of secretary-servant with more simplicity and renewed conviction and faith that serving Śrīla Prabhupāda was the best preaching for me.

In ending my story, I wish I could write here that after this incident I lived "happily ever after" in perfect obedience to Śrīla Prabhupāda—with no other thought. But that is not a fact. I still had some reversions to my desire to "go preach," and thus I proved to be a less than ideal disciple. As throughout this narrative I have mentioned the faults of devotees such as Paṇḍitji, Bhūrijana, Nanda-kumāra, and others, so neither was I perfect. In fact, if I were to give myself a grade for the whole performance as secretary-servant,

I think I would deserve, at best, a grade of C. But I do believe it was at least a passing grade, by the grace of the lenient, perfect master, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I did hold fast—although at times shakily—to his order that I give up concoctions and serve him as he desired. I stayed as his secretary-servant.

And so, with Prabhupāda's and my passport as well as our round-the-world airline tickets in my briefcase, and with my face growing daily more yellow with jaundice, I accompanied Prabhupāda, my beloved master, to Hyderabad, the first step on our far-ranging tour.

Now I have told the story, and the truth is out—my only qualification as a devotee is that I am held up by the mercy of my spiritual master. That is the glorious truth.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the perfect master. All glories to those who serve his order.

* * *

Looking back over the events described here, I see a fatherly Śrīla Prabhupāda giving two gold rings to Śrutakīrti and his wife, to be used as their wedding rings. Then I see him discussing with Karandhara and Śrutakīrti as to who shall be his new servant. He was residing in Los Angeles, a saffron-dressed figure walking at dawn on the beach or through the park, wearing a scarf and sweater, daily giving his leaders dozens of propaganda ideas and flawlessly speaking *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the temple. He observed his new servant running here and there and gave him the name "Sir Isaac Newton." He went to Hawaii to stay two weeks, and they put him up in a skyscraper hotel, but he was not impressed. Looking down at the crowds of people in the Waikiki water, he said, "Jumping all day like monkeys with no thought for self-realization." At Hawaii temple he explained to hippie chanters the need for ISKCON to be highly organized.

He flew great distances as routine work for his spiritual master,

just as he crossed the ocean for the first time in 1966 when coming to America. In Hong Kong, like Nṛsimha-guru, he wrenched out the poisonous innards of bad influence from the hearts of sincere but misguided devotees, and he informed the international press that a popular *guru* was a cheat and a dog.

When he arrived in India, in Vṛndāvana, at least his residential house was habitable, but the temple was far from complete. They must get it all done, by extreme efforts of devotion and renunciation, he ordered, before the year was out.

At Māyāpur he was the benevolent king and preceptor of all the devotees who had gathered to fulfill the desires of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and all the previous *ācāryas*—worldwide Vaiṣṇavas, a little sick and culture-shocked, but heartily chanting the holy names in the birthland of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He led them all with him back to Vṛndāvana and informed them on several morning walks how to organize *varṇāśrama* colleges for real education. The big festivities over, the devotees returned to preach in different parts of the world—to the real mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda. And Prabhupāda himself returned to his office, Bombay, where he waited out the entanglements, “peacefully opposing” the enemies of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, who in Kali-yuga thrive even in India. Book-writing always went on, and directions to devotees through the mail. And wherever he was, he was talking amazingly about Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the life and soul of Śrīla Prabhupāda. How fortunate was he who could be with him! How unfortunate to not appreciate.

Sitting on the roof in the tropical dusk while palm trees swayed like servants fanning him, Śrīla Prabhupāda heard with youthful enthusiasm that the tickets, visas, and arrangements were all in order and that he could soon travel again—throughout Europe and then all around the globe, to attend to the dying. With three planned Ratha-yātrās, and hundreds of lectures and *kīrtanas* he traveled again, to bring the lost souls back to eternal life and knowledge and bliss.

Thus Prabhupāda was moving through the world. But as clouds move across the moon, giving the illusory appearance that the moon is moving, so most people could not see the real movements of the pure devotee but took whatever they could materially perceive as the all-in-all. By Kṛṣṇa's grace, we may rise above such ignorant perception, and see the spiritual voice, the transcendental vibration, the preaching form, and the inner meaning of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

EPILOGUE

It was in the midst of an active, several-day visit to Geneva that Prabhupāda suddenly gave me a new service. It was not my doing, but as when I joined Śrīla Prabhupāda as his servant, it came from Prabhupāda himself. Even before arriving in Geneva, while we were in Bombay, Prabhupāda had often spoken to groups of devotees about a preaching project just starting in America—the effort to distribute sets of his books to university libraries. Hṛdayānanda Mahārāja had taken the group of *brahmācārīs*, formerly my traveling party, and done successful experimental work at the colleges in New England. Now whenever there was a meeting of devotees or a public lecture, Prabhupāda would tell how his books were being well received by the American college professors. He repeatedly had me bring in and read to him a letter written by Rāmeśvara describing the success of the traveling library distribution team. The report described that Yale University and others had taken standing orders of the complete sixty volumes of the *Bhāgavatam* and seventeen volumes of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

One night in his little room in Geneva, before Bhagavān dāsa and two other G.B.C. members, Prabhupāda was stressing that the library distribution was of the utmost importance. He said that he had been advising devotees to do this for many years, but as yet there had been little results. If the academic authorities could come to approve of these books, favorably review them, accept them in their libraries, and use them in college courses, it would be a significant achievement for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. As Prabhupāda spoke, I felt aroused to take part in this exciting preaching. Only a dead man could fail to be aroused. Prabhupāda was speaking to his G.B.C. men in a challenging way, to inspire them and draw out their positive commitment.

"First it should be done in America," he said. "It is of the utmost importance! But it must be *organized*!"

"If you like, Prabhupāda," I said, "I can go and do it." Prabhupāda turned to me with an instant glance and a gesture of his hand—"Yes!" he said. "You can go immediately!"

It happened so fast I could hardly believe it. My own remark, although based on a longstanding desire, had come out spontaneously. His response—"Yes, do it immediately"—was also spontaneous, affirmative, and very strong. There would have to be more practical discussion about it, but all the G.B.C. men present acknowledged that Prabhupāda had just given me a new service.

The next day, while I was massaging Prabhupāda, he affirmed his proposal.

"Have you been in touch with the book party in the U.S.A.?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "but I heard that they have stopped their work." I told Prabhupāda that the party had broken up and the devotees were now engaged in different programs.

"So you organize them," said Prabhupāda. "Lead them and they can assist."

Now I was certain that he wanted me to do it.

After a few moments of silence, Prabhupāda added, "You can also recruit Mohanānanda to help." Mohanānanda was a devotee who had fallen away from active service, but whom Prabhupāda regarded as qualified. "Convince him," said Prabhupāda, "that this is very important work, distributing books in the colleges. And also Hṛdayānanda Goswami may occasionally come. Travel all over the country and distribute the books to the colleges."

Needless to say, this was my heart's desire.

After a pause, Prabhupāda continued, "So who shall be your replacement? Brahmānanda?" Over the years Brahmānanda Swami had taken many turns as Prabhupāda's secretary. At present he was in his G.B.C. zone in Africa, but there was a good chance that he would be able to come.

After another silence during which I continued massaging, Prabhupāda began speaking of his translating work.

"I am now translating the *ātmārāma* verse," he said, "Lord Caitanya is showing that everyone is *ātmārāma* and everyone is *muni* and all can come to Kṛṣṇa by the grace of the pure devotee. He is explaining the *ātmārāma* verse from that line."

When I had finished the massage and was about to take my leave, Prabhupāda said, "So when we get to America, you will begin your work?"

Several weeks later, after observing Prabhupāda's revolutionary preaching to favorable Christians in France, Germany, and Australia, and after riding in the chariots with Prabhupāda at Ratha-yātrās in Australia, Chicago, and San Francisco, I returned with him to Los Angeles. As I had begun as Prabhupāda's personal servant in L.A., so I returned there in my last stop as his secretary-servant. Brahmānanda Swami had arrived as my replacement. A team of *brahmacārīs*, complete with vans, suits, and briefcases, had also gathered to work with me as the U.S. library distribution team.

We immediately began our work, while Prabhupāda was still in L.A. After a few busy days, I was suddenly called one night at 10 P.M. to go up and see Śrīla Prabhupāda. As I entered his room, he treated me just as if I was still his servant, asking me to please close the curtains. "How do you like the library party work?" Prabhupāda asked.

"I think it is without limit," I said confidently. "It seems to be a very good field."

Prabhupāda looked pleased to see my enthusiasm and confidence with the work. We spoke for a few minutes, and I realized that he had called me up just to make sure I was doing all right.

The next afternoon we were able to see Prabhupāda in his garden and present to him results of standing orders we had achieved that very day from colleges in Los Angeles. Prabhupāda became very enlivened to hear it, and I considered that our beginning work was now blessed. On another night, Prabhupāda again called for

me about 10 P.M. He could understand that switching my services was producing a crucial change, and he wanted to see that I wasn't suffering or regretful. When he found that I was doing nicely in the new service he had assigned, he seemed satisfied.

Prabhupāda soon left Los Angeles, and for the first time in six-and-a-half months I did not accompany him. But for almost ten years I had been schooled in the principles of serving the spiritual master in separation, and so I was able to go on without depression. I was still with Prabhupāda and he was still with me.

The library party's work soon became successful beyond all our expectations, and I was writing to Prabhupāda of wonderful results. The *brahmacārīs* on the team, especially Mahābuddhi and Ghanaśyāma, were so expert that we placed standing orders at almost every university we visited.

In my first return letter from Prabhupāda he wrote,

It is very encouraging that many professors have purchased books themselves and are considering to order them for their students. I very much like this program with the standing orders. Try to increase it up to 50,000 such orders from the libraries.

Other letters, which I received monthly were all encouraging. One written three months later from Bombay was a particular favorite of the library party:

I am very glad to hear of the continued success of the library distribution program. You know it that I also was selling my books in this way to the schools and colleges and libraries. I would write, then publish, then distribute without any help. So how much pleased I am with you that you are helping me in this mission. So go on with your work. Kṛṣṇa will help you. You are sincere in your purpose. This is very important engagement of visiting the professors and the colleges and libraries

and getting the standing orders. This is the most important engagement. Do not doubt this.

Encouraged by Prabhupāda's high esteem for the library work, we traveled constantly from state to state distributing his books, remembering his words and activities, and hoping to always please him.

It was a few months later, in November 1974, that Prabhupāda completed his translation and commentary of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. In the Concluding Words, Prabhupāda made a statement the members of the library party took directly to heart as a reference to their own work.

It is my wish that devotees of Lord Caitanya all over the world enjoy this translation, and I am glad to express my gratitude to the learned men in the Western countries who are so pleased with my work that they are ordering in advance all my books that will be published in the future. On this occasion, therefore, I request my disciples who are determined to help me in this work to continue their cooperation fully, so philosophers, scholars, religionists, and people in general all over the world will benefit by reading our transcendental literature such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

* * *

Before leaving the reader, shall I attempt to draw out again the important lessons? But I think they are already clear in the context of the story: service to the *guru* through personal, bodily association (*vapuh*), and service to the *guru's* order (*vāṇī*) while in separation from the *guru's* personal presence—both are valid.

Another important lesson I hope I learned from my experience is that a disciple should not concoct his own devotional service but should patiently execute the duties given to him by his spiritual master. As Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has written, and as

devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement sing every morning: "By the grace of the spiritual master one can please Kṛṣṇa; without pleasing the spiritual master no one can make any spiritual advancement." *The Nectar of Devotion* also states *śruti smṛti purāṇāṇāṁ*, "Devotional service performed without authoratative direction (as from *guru*, *śāstra* and *sādhū*) is simply a disturbance."

Lord Kṛṣṇa, who dwells in everyone's heart, knows well our desires, and He will award them to us as we reciprocate with Him. One who is serious about making spiritual progress in this lifetime should be confident that in the course of his devotional service his spiritual and material needs will be fulfilled by the Supreme Lord. This is called *śraddhā* or firm faith. All desirable things will be accomplished simply by faithfully executing the instructions of the spiritual master.

Through the life of the great *bhakta* Dhruva Mahārāja, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* teaches us. At first Dhruva Mahārāja approached devotional service with material ambitions, but by strenuously serving his spiritual master, Nārada Muni, Dhruva came to see Lord Viṣṇu face to face and thus he gave up all desires, except the desire to render unalloyed service at His lotus feet. Dhruva Mahārāja, however, remained ashamed that he had demanded something from the Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport. "Everyone of us who is engaged in devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be completely free from all material aspirations. Otherwise we will have to lament like Dhruva Mahārāja." In the case of my service as secretary-servant to Śrīla Prabhupāda, I was not interested in material desires, but I had a notion of devotional service and preaching that was, for a certain, troublesome period, different from the service that Śrīla Prabhupāda had given me. By the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda's stern instructions, I was not allowed to deviate in the matter of serving him. Fortunately, I had enough sense to submit to his order, and according to the sweet will of Kṛṣṇa and *guru*, I was later awarded the very service I had aspired to. Thus the spiritual master may be compared to a cow who pro-

fects the sometimes erring and stumbling calf.

Lord Caitanya's *Śikṣāṣṭaka* urges us to come to the highest standard of devotional service: "I do not want wealth, women or many followers. All I want in my life is your causeless devotional service life after life." If we sincerely desire to serve Kṛṣṇa in a particular way, the spiritual master will know, and he may allow us to render that service. But if according to the spiritual master's personal plans for us, and according to the needs of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we cannot immediately execute the service that we desire, then we should be very careful to patiently put aside our plans and abide by the higher directions. We cannot demand from the spiritual master or act independently from him or else "we will have to lament like Dhruva Mahārāja."

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the *Upadeśāmṛta*, "The spiritual master must not be subjected to the advice of a disciple." The disciple should rather always consider himself as a fool before the spiritual master. This example was shown even by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who always approached His spiritual master, Īśvara Purī, in this humble way. Although one may be considered an advanced devotee by others, he should always approach his spiritual master with the conviction that as a disciple he is completely unaware of the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and requires his spiritual master to instruct him. As Śrīla Prabhupāda once wrote me in a letter, "Before the spiritual master a dull-headed fool is required; an over-intelligent disciple is not a very good qualification."

I know my own example in serving Śrīla Prabhupāda is not without fault, but I have offered it here because it shows the expertise and wisdom of the perfect master, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I also offer my example as solace to others: although we may be imperfect, as long as we surrender our rascal plans and follow the order of *guru*, we can be engaged as an instrument of the previous *ācāryas* and make our contribution to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Kṛṣṇa consciousness contains this hope for all: that

by somehow or other sticking to the order of the spiritual master, we may each come to the higher standards of unalloyed devotional service. As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in a *Bhagavad-gītā* purport (3.31), "In the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

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